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Anna Maria Ortese

A Pawnshop in Naples

THE bus that should have left me off at Via Duomo, where San Biagio dei Librai begins, was so jammed that I couldn't get down in time, and when I finally set foot on the ground, there before me was the squalid front of the railroad station, the monument to Garibaldi, and a cavalcade of faded green tram-cars, black, broken-down taxis, carriages drawn by small horses now fast asleep. I turned and walked back to Via Pietro Coletta, in the famed Tribunali district. The sky was clear blue, glittering, and beneath this light people were confusedly coming and going among buildings that rose up here and there, without any apparent order, like clouds. At the entrance to the Forcella section I stopped, perplexed. Further ahead, at the top of a narrow passage, there was a great bustle, a waving of colours among which bright red and black stood out most of all, a dolorous buzzing of voices. I thought a market, a street brawl. An old woman was seated next to a stone at the angle of the street and I stopped to ask her what all those people were doing. She raised a face enclosed in a large black handkerchief and pitted with smallpox, gazed also at that distant streak of sun in the centre of Forcella where that horde swelled like a snake and out of which came that intermittent dolorous hum. "They're not doing anything," she said quietly, "You're dreaming."

For years I hadn't gone down there and I had forgotten that Forcella, along with San Biagio dei Librai, is one of Naples' most thickly crowded streets, where the people's mere passing often gives you the sense of an extraordinary event. Through a veil of dust the sun was diffusing a reddish, no longer gay light. From the doorways of hundreds of small shops, or from chairs set out on the sidewalks, women and children watched this sun with a strange stupefied air. Even the donkeys hitched to the vegetable wagons seemed to be struck by this light's peculiar thickness, and, with the patience of apathy, kept flicking their long ears to chase away the flies. From a tiny hand-cart like those used by street-cleaners, momentarily abandoned in the middle of the street, a head emerged; down below it was the trunk of a man about fifty, neatly clad in a jacket buttoned up to the neck and sewn at bottom and sides as a sack is sewn. A gilt plate tied on his chest with string invited the passers-by to drop alms there, but no one noticed it and, to tell the truth, even the man himself did nothing to arouse the public's compassion. His wine-ruddy cheek leaning against a bag, his ears also shot red, positively glowing, from wine, with grey hair raining down over his eyebrows and a delicate smile on his half-open mouth, this citizen of Naples was sleeping. Meanwhile, on every side, male and female dwarfs were walking past, dressed decorously in black, with pallid contorted faces, great wretched eyes, their fingers like twigs at their breasts, taking pains to avoid children and dogs that came clashing against them. Other beggars and cripples lay stretched out on the pavement, the picture of this or that patron saint resting under their chins, or a sign that listed their misfortunes and children. They were waiting sedately, dreaming. Some church bells rang out loudly, summoning these souls to Mass.

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Coming out of Forcella at Via Duomo the crowd seemed more ordered and somehow silent, yet soon it thronged again on San Biagio dei Librai, which could be considered a prolongation of Forcella. . . . That carpet of flesh which, even as I entered San Biagio dei Librai, had appeared so very thick, now, on the spot, no longer existed, or at least was not so hallucinatory, in much the way that a fresco alters when you come up close to it. But one thing was left: as I had felt on Forcella, I had never seen so many people together, walking or standing still, meeting or fleeing each other, calling greetings from windows and shops, proposing the price of a piece of goods or crying out an entreaty—all in the same soft, broken, singing voice, though more on the note of lamentation than that much-talked-about Neapolitan gaiety. What chiefly dismayed you was the number of children, a force burst from the unconscious, and, to him who could see the black halo encircling their heads, absolutely uncontrolled and unblessed. Every so often one of these children popped out from a hole at the pavement's level, moved forward with a few tiny steps, like a mouse, and then swiftly went back inside. The alleyways that cut across this street, itself so narrow and eroded, were still narrower and worn away. I could see the sheets of laundry with which Neapolitan tradition is so flutteringly full, but only the black apertures where they had once been hanging: windows, doors, balconies with a tin can in which a sprig of lemon verbena was yellowingly withering, inviting you to peer through these miserable panes in search of walls, furnishings, perhaps small windows flung open and flowering with the green of an inside garden. But not a thing did you see except a confused tangle of assorted objects—blankets, or fragments of straw baskets, pots and chairs —over which, like a sacred image smudged by time, protruded a woman's yellow cheekbones, staring, pensive eyes, the black crown of her hair caught together on her head with a hairpin, and thin arms joined across her lap. On the alleyway's floor—a Persian carpet now frazzled down to clots and filaments—lay bits of the most varied garbage, and in the midst of this, too, there sprouted other little children's forms, pale and swollen or bizarrely thin, with huge shaved heads and tender eyes. Few were dressed, most of them wore only an undershirt pulled down over their bellies, and almost all went without shoes or wore ancient sandals held together by string. One child played with a tin can. Another, on the ground, was carefully spreading dust over his face. Some other children seemed to be involved in constructing a miniature altar, with a stone and on top a paper saint, and there was one who, gracefully mimicking a priest, was turning in an arc, giving the benediction.

THE suavity of those faces figuring forth Madonnas and Christ-childs, Virgins and Martyrs, bent over a gilded cradle beflowered and veiled by very very fine lace, that appeared in almost all the shops along San Biagio dei Librai, clashed with the savage hardness of the alleys, in whose reality not the smallest trace of such tenderness lived.

You didn't have to know much to realise that in this place the feelings of family affection had been a cult, and precisely because of this had degenerated into vice and madness. At the end, a race emptied of all logic and all reason had clung to this shapeless tumult of feelings and had now become shadow, neurasthenia, weakness, resigned fear and impudent gaiety. A formless poverty, silent as a spider, was in its own way weaving and unweaving those miserable threads, entangling ever more the lowest strata of the plebs, which here is queen. This population grew, spread, always more bloodless, frightfully confounding the ideas of the Public Administration at the same time as it inflated with weird pride and even weirder hopes the hearts of the priests. Here, the sea did not border Naples. I was certain that none of these people had ever seen the sea or could remember it. In this dark, dark ditch nothing flashed but the fires of sex, beneath the black sky of the supernatural.

Being midday, and since in the preceding days it had rained at that hour, I glanced at the sky and saw it was covered with a veil of cottonish mist which soon caused the houses' shadows and the already very short shadows of the people to grow less sharp and heavy. In

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front of me some women were walking, preceded by two very tall priests, whose waxen hands were closed around books of red leather and who soon, with a rustle of soutanes, vanished under a portico. The women carried white bundles and kept looking around them, talking in sighing whispers. When they reached the church of San Nicola, they made the sign of the cross and then entered the courtyard which opened out before the church.

"*O Magnum Pietatis Opus*" was written on the huge front of the building at the courtyard's rear. Its lifeless grey façade was similar to those of all the hospitals and old people's homes in Naples' poor quarters; yet behind it, instead of beds, were ranged the counters and grills of the pawnshop—the Bank of Naples' "great work of compassion."

WHEN I got up to the pawnshop on the building's second floor, before one of the most majestic doors I have ever seen, there were various little groups already on the stairway, some sitting on the steps, others on their bundles: these were the pregnant women, the old, the sickly ones, those who couldn't stand up any longer and had begged a relative or a friend to hold their place for them in the queue.

I pushed through the door, carefully making my way forward among the bodies, and I found myself in an immense hall with a very high ceiling, illuminated by two wings of very large windows, each window topped by another equally large, square in shape and hermetically closed. In the window embrasures there hung down, like the thinnest of rags, long threads of spider-webs.

It was the hall set apart for the pledging of valuables.

A great crowd, only approximately disposed in line, was milling wildly before the cages of the "New Pledges." There was a vast tumult because just this morning the order had arrived to give as little as possible for each pledge. Lemon-coloured faces, hooded in ugly "perms," were turning and re-turning with a deluded air, in their hands the grey pawn-sheet. An enormous old woman, all belly, her eyes inflamed, cried ostentatiously, kissing a necklace again and again before handing it over. Other women and a few men with sharp-pointed faces waited composedly on a black bench set against the wall. On the floor some children in undershirts were playing.

"Nunzio Apicella!" a clerk's voice shouted towards the scanty line of those redeeming their pawns. "Aspasia De Fonzo!" From time to time the shouts continued, overlaid by the grieving drone of the people discussing the new regulation and unable to resign themselves to it. A black-mustached policeman with large, languid eyes, who wore his uniform like a bathrobe, walked up and down, indifferent and bored, now and then pretending to put the queue in order again with his hands. He was talking with someone when the great door of the hall burst open violently, and there entered a squat, red-haired woman of about forty, dressed in black and dragging with her two extremely white children. This unhappy woman, whose name and profession I discovered later—Antonietta De Liguoro, haberdasher—had learned in the street that the Bank, in which she was going to pawn a necklace, was that day closing early, and that they might not let her in. Her face flaming red, congested, her blue eyes starting out of their sockets, she beseeched everyone to do her this favour, for she must pawn her necklace before closing-time, since her husband had to leave for Turin where her oldest son was gravely ill. Nothing could quiet her. Even when they had assured her that she could immediately get into the line, she continued to sob and cry: "Help me, Mother of Carmine!" Many of these women on the line, having forgotten their heavy sadness of a moment before, now turned to her, the furthest away calling to her with sympathy and support, the closest touching her shoulder, her hands, adjusting her hair with their hair-pins; not to speak of the attention lavished on the two children, the long-drawn-out and slightly theatrical scene of maternal clucking. These two children, who were no more than three or four years old and thin and pallid as worms, wore on their wax-like faces certain little smiles so old and cynical as to strike one with amazement, and every so often they would shoot out a glance, both malicious and questioning, at their frenetic mother. A kind of popular movement

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swiftly swept that woman—about whom everyone soon knew the smallest detail—up to the counter, leaping over the ferocious bureaucracy of "the turn." And this is the dialogue that reached my ears:

Clerk, after having looked at the necklace, dryly: Three thousand eight hundred lire.

The Haberdasher-Lady: I beg you, make it four thousand.

Clerk: My daughter, that's the regulation.

Haberdasher-Lady: But my husband must take the train, I implore you, we have a sick son and these two little creatures here. Do it for Our Sorrowing Lady.

Clerk, very calm: If you want it, it's three thousand——Amedeo, tell Salvatore to bring another coffee, without sugar. . . .

Her eyes burning, though now perfectly dry, Antonietta De Liguoro passed again through all the others, proudly disregarding or perhaps not even seeing them because of her anguish, the very ones who just a moment ago had offered her the solace of their Christian pity. The two children ran after her, their little hands clutching at her dress, and she did not seem to notice.

"THAT woman there," the policeman said to a young man who had the look of a student and was carrying a red bag under his arm out of which stuck the fringe of a towel, "It's a year that her husband is leaving on the train for Turin. . . . She has nobody in Turin, she doesn't even have a husband, she doesn't want to stand in the queue . . . and I don't say a word to her. . . ." His eyes followed the clever haberdasher, who now, having made a short stop at the cashier's counter, was escaping to the door, her money and the grey sheet of the pawn-ticket tight against her breast. Squalid and compassionate, the crowd forgot itself to accompany the presumed victim with remarks of consolation and indignation against an old injustice, which seemed just now revealing itself to them: "May Jesus Christ comfort her . . . Mother of Carmine help her . . . God puts salt on the wound . . .," glancing meanwhile with looks of abstract hate at the cages.

Now the clerk's indifferent voice had again begun calling out: "Di Vincenzo Maria . . . Fusco Addolorata . . . Della Morte Carmela." Suddenly a deep silence fell, then a startled murmur, full of childlike astonishment, ran through the three files of "New Pledges." "What's going on?" asked a clerk, leaning out of his cubby-hole. A brownish butterfly with many, many threads of gold on its wings and back had entered, God knows how, from the door of the stairway, flying over that throng of heads, bent shoulders, troubled faces; and now . . . fluttering . . . rising . . . happy. . . unmemoried . . . undecided about alighting in any particular place. "Oh! Oh! Oh!" they all gasped.

"Look, see the garden!" a mother cried to her infant who was crying slowly, his head against her shoulder. Near the door, her mouth stuffed with bread, an old misshapen woman was singing.

(Translated from the Italian by Raymond Rosenthal.)

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Philip Toynbee

Sense and Nonsense

IT IS rash for a layman to attack a body of experts, and the warning corpses of laymen lie strewn over many past battlefields of controversy. But it is important to distinguish between those academic subjects which are, by their nature, impervious to lay intervention, and others which cannot and should not be so well defended. Historians, classical scholars, experts in textual criticism are armed against the interloper by their almost inevitable advantage in the possession of facts. This applies equally, of course, to *historians* of philosophy or of mathematics, but I do not see how it can apply either to pure mathematicians or to pure philosophers.

There is, of course, a reasonable predisposition to believe that any man who is professionally concerned with a method of thought will be able to think more clearly within its terms than other people. In all directions the human mind tends to run more smoothly with practice. But even this probability is considerably higher in the case of the professional mathematician than in that of the professional philosopher. Mathematicians, as the logical positivists are surely right to point out, are the masters of a totally self-sufficient system of thought, a mountain of higher and higher tautological subtleties. There can be no argument here.

Now it is, of course, a principal claim of the logical positivist school of philosophers that their subject is in this respect strictly analogous to mathematics. Philosophy, too, is to be a closed system of logical analysis. But by thus stepping outside their subject in order to define it they immediately become, while that important act of definition is in process, themselves laymen. A subject cannot be circumscribed within its own terms but only in its relationship to other subjects. If, for example, the mathematicians were suddenly to decide that all philosophy could be subsumed under their own title of possession, the logical positivists would, however reluctantly (for they often talk like the poor relations of mathematicians), be obliged to fight for their property. And it is at this vital and initial point in the logical positivist argument—the point at which philosophy is defined and its limits are so strictly drawn—that we may, without impertinence or presumption, join issue with them.

I do so myself in this article from the point of view of a writer, and of a modern man who is normally concerned about the intellectual and moral climate in which he lives. Nobody who so concerns himself can doubt the present importance of the logical positivists in this country. Twenty years ago they, and their various allies, were a comparatively small group of *enfants terribles*, fighting an amusing, lively, and iconoclastic battle against the heavy, entrenched battalions of older schools. It was possible at that time to disagree with logical positivism and yet to be delighted by the sharp little antidote of clear thinking which they were administering to the old gang of metaphysicians. But today the antidote has, by its abuse, itself become a poison. Today this school is the dominant one in Oxford, Cambridge, and London; it has spread its cold tentacles into the provincial universities, into the United States

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and the Dominions. In fact logical positivism has become the official English philosophy of our time, and several generations of students have already passed under its stern influence. And when philosophers are required by the BBC it is usually logical positivists who are chosen.

I am concerned about this, both as a writer and as a thoughtful man, because the dominance of this school excludes the generation of other schools and harshly limits the freedom of the creative imagination. It is not my intention to launch a pragmatic attack on logical positivism, but to show that its philosophical claims are unjustified. Nevertheless I would not be making my rash attack if I did not believe that the logical positivists are doing harm.

WE must remember that we are not offered any prospect of a later release from this strait-jacket. The claim of this school, though it may seem from the outside to be only one of many schools in the world, existing at only one of many times in the world's history, is that they have brought philosophy to its final culmination. In fact different "schools" may no longer exist. "I maintain," writes Professor Ayer, "that there is nothing in the nature of philosophy to warrant the existence of conflicting philosophical 'schools.' And I attempt to substantiate this by providing a definitive solution of the problems which have been the chief sources of controversy between philosophers in the past."

There are, we understand, points to be cleared up here and there, but the final method of philosophical investigation has now been evolved. Now, this conviction of possessing a final and unique revelation is oddly reminiscent of the Christian Illuminati. It seems, on the face of it, dangerously parochial, and I believe that the danger is not only to the good but constricted minds of the logical positivists but also to all those of us in England who are interested in ideas.

It would be unreasonable and obtuse to suggest that professional philosophers should deliberately manufacture only such ideas as will fertilise the minds of novelists, poets, and ordinary people. But our philosophers are not only failing to do this: they are spraying our whole world of the mind with a desperately non-selective weed-killer. And this is another example of the dichotomies and fissures which are making our society so difficult to inhabit with grace, sincerity, passion, and intelligence. Whatever the absurdities of existentialism in France, it has at least acted as a seminal force, inducing other and perhaps contradictory ideas, fertilising the French literature of our time, keeping the whole field of speculation both rich and open. As I say, it cannot be demanded of the logical positivists that they should set themselves this task, but it is sad indeed for the rest of us that it did not come their way to do so. If we compare the immense positive and human effect of a book like Pascal's *Pensées* with the grimly finite deserts which the logical positivists have unrolled around us, we see at once the difference between ideas which are closely related to the reality of human experience and those which are related to little except each other. Yet to these latter-day sole possessors of the truth Pascal must be a grotesque abomination. "*Le cœur a ses raisons. . . .*" Tush!

SINCE 1936, when Professor A. J. Ayer published his beautifully clear and succinct text-book, *Language, Truth and Logic*, his disciples and allies have made many concessions. Indeed he himself, in the preface to the second edition of this book, which appeared in 1948, has so mitigated the severity of his original doctrine that there should be very little left of it. This "should" have happened, I write; but it has not. The text of the book's second edition remains unaltered, and the book is still canonical; the original doctrine is still preached, with only minor variations of language and emphasis. The great Viennese masters of the logical positivist school, Wittgenstein and Carnap, have not been denied, in spite of the fact that Ayer's concession would seem to reduce their apocalyptic philosophical message to an unnecessary platitude.

We should examine the original axiom of the 1936 edition in the light of the subsequent

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concession. "To test," wrote Ayer, eighteen years ago, "whether a sentence expresses a genuine empirical hypothesis, I adopt what may be called a modified verification principle. For I require of an empirical hypothesis, not indeed that it should be conclusively verifiable, but that some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood. If a putative proposition fails to satisfy this principle, and is not a tautology, then I hold that it is metaphysical, and that, being metaphysical, it is neither true nor false but literally senseless. It will be found that much of what ordinarily passes for philosophy is metaphysical according to this theory. . . ." And, indeed, the first chapter of this book is adamantly entitled "The Elimination of Metaphysics."

In his introduction to the second edition of his book Professor Ayer shows himself dissatisfied with these preliminary and important assertions. At first he attempts to rescue himself from certain ambiguities by substituting, with a new definition for it, the word "statement" for the word "proposition." This is a logical clarification which need not concern us here; it is a purely internal operation, demanded, no doubt, by Ayer's more severe colleagues rather than by the opponents of his views. But this act of clarification is immediately followed by a paragraph which is quite remarkable in its implications. With his usual neatness and clarity Ayer has presented a devastating and complete argument against the philosophical school to which he belongs and against the axioms which are later to appear in his own book. This is what he writes:

> It is indeed open to anyone to adopt a different criterion of meaning and so to produce an alternative definition which may very well correspond to one of the ways in which the word "meaning" is commonly used. And if a statement satisfied such a criterion, there is, no doubt, some proper use of the word "understanding" in which it would be capable of being understood. Nevertheless, I think that, unless it satisfied the principle of verification, it would not be capable of being understood *in the sense in which either scientific hypotheses or common-sense statements are habitually understood* [my italics]. I confess, however, that it now seems to me unlikely that any metaphysician would yield to a claim of this kind; and although I still defend the use of the criterion of verifiability as a methodological principle, I realise that for the effective elimination of metaphysics it needs to be supported by detailed analyses of particular metaphysical arguments.

Now it so happens that I had already written out my argument against Professor Ayer's views on the basis of the first edition of his book only to discover, when I read his new introduction, that he had made all the concessions which I was demanding of him. What is left to show is that the second of the two quotations I have given is totally destructive of the first one—totally destructive, indeed, of all the fundamental premises which follow it in the still unaltered text of the original book. Charmingly, Ayer now prepares us for an indulgent reception of "a young man's book." "In the ten years that have passed since *Language, Truth and Logic* was first published, I have come to see that the questions with which it deals are not in all respects so simple as it makes them appear; but I still believe that the point of view which it expresses is substantially correct." I quote this honest admission, not in order to crow, but in order to protest that it does not go nearly far enough. If we accept the new introduction we must reject everything in the book which distinguishes the logical positivist view from that of any commonsensical and undogmatic layman. Metaphysics are not, after all, eliminated, and we may sport in that beguiling territory as much as we please.

For the dispute between the logical positivists and their opponents has nearly always been a territorial one. What we had wished to do was not to attack these bold logicians on their own logical territory (when this has been attempted by, for example, certain neo-scholastic theologians, the challengers have nearly always taken a beating). What we hoped was that we could drive the invaders back into their citadel and out of the many wide lands of thought and language on which they have encroached during the last twenty years. (Nor have the encroachments ceased since Ayer issued his general order to withdraw.)

Let us examine first of all the definition of philosophy which Ayer gives us and which is, I think, fundamental to the whole argument

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which follows. The criterion of verifiability states that every positive proposition (or, new style, "statement") is literally nonsense unless it is either a tautology (two and two makes four) or an empirical assertion which is in principle verifiable by the senses. And true philosophy is free from "nonsense" as thus defined.

Now it seems to me that this attempt to reduce the meaning of the word "philosophy" is an unhelpful, indeed illegitimate, linguistic project which is likely to lead not to greater clarity but to greater confusion. Suppose that an artist or a paint-manufacturer invents a new shade of red: his proper linguistic action will be to invent a new specific title for it under the generic title of red. He may even, if he is very pleased indeed with his discovery, claim that it is not a red at all but a new genus of colour; and he may label it accordingly. But what he has no right to do is to claim that this new sub-colour, or new colour, is the only shade which can properly be called red and that all the other shades which have previously enjoyed that title are really purple, or perhaps orange. The first process leads, as new language always should, to greater subtlety of definition; the second can only lead to a linguistic battle in which the necessary, and necessarily vague, word "philosophy" is torn, like a Roman standard, from hand to hand. The more sub-titles we invent the better for our language, but the wider, generic titles are only confused when they are arbitrarily narrowed.

By what right, we may ask, does Ayer attempt to take this wide word philosophy away from us, who are its ordinary users, and attempt to give us his stone in place of the bread we are accustomed to? To us Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Epicurus, Duns Scotus, Aquinas, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger have always been philosophers. Yet all of them were metaphysicians as well, and their metaphysics are certainly very difficult to distinguish from that part of their work and thought which are allowed to be philosophical by Ayer's definition. "Our answer to this," he writes, "is that it is not the case that the 'history of philosophy' is almost entirely a history of metaphysics. That it contains some metaphysics is undeniable. But I think it can be shown that the majority of those who are commonly supposed to have been great philosophers were primarily not metaphysicians but analysts." In defence of this view he cites Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Hobbes, Bentham, John Stuart Mill—all of whom are English, all of whom, except Berkeley, belong to that wing of past philosophy with which the logical positivists are most in sympathy, and only the first three of whom would normally be thought of as "great philosophers." In a sudden unexplained snatch he also grabs Plato, Aristotle, and Kant and pushes them into the bag of "analysts." The whole operation is a dubious one, and the more so if we remember Ayer's earlier and more spirited claim that "much of what ordinarily passes for philosophy is metaphysical . . . "!

This is not a trivial point, for it immediately raises the whole question of our respective rights to a language which is the common inheritance of us all. Words like "philosophy," "true," and "sense" are the common property of everyone who speaks the English language. It is open to any of us to redefine them as much and as often as he chooses, but if, in doing so, each redefiner forgets that the words retain a wide and agreed meaning in the ordinary language of communication, then we shall be confronted with a babel of special meanings.

But a further and equally illegitimate juggling with words is practised by the logical positivists when they embark on the next stage of their argument. Professor Ayer has made it plain that much of what has previously passed for philosophy is to be excluded from that title; it is in future to be regarded as metaphysics. Now the next stage might reasonably have been to turn the weapon of philosophy, by its new definition, only on to what has been so precisely defined as philosophy. The terms of reference have been made clear and with them, one would have supposed, the field of operations. And it is, indeed, obvious to anyone who has read or listened to the arguments of logical positivists that they are admirable disputants in the field of logic—in the field, that is, which they have defined

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for themselves as their proper territory. An opponent who accepts their own terms can be meaningfully argued against, and is usually defeated.

But far from being satisfied with the useful function of demonstrating to us the logical errors in our attempts at logical argument, they proceed to an assault on the language and the sense of metaphysics. One might reasonably have expected Professor Ayer's first chapter to be called "The Exclusion of Metaphysics"; but it is in fact called "The Elimination of Metaphysics." In other words, past "philosophers" have become philosophers again for the purpose of proving that they were bad ones. And indeed, far from confining themselves, as Ayer claims that they will do, to "clarifying the propositions of science by exhibiting their logical relationships, and by defining the symbols which occur in them"—far from restricting themselves to this modest and useful function, we find them ready at all times to apply their instrument to every field of traditional philosophical speculation. They are ready and eager to clarify our terms in ethics and psychology, and will gladly point out to us our own lapses into metaphysics. It was typical of our situation that eight logical positivists from Oxford should have discussed for us over the Third Programme, in a brisk half-hour, the antique, agonising and, to most of us, unsolved problem of free-will and moral responsibility. A nimble verbal dance was the entertaining but ultimately uninstructive result.

The word "philosophy," then, was first of all narrowed down to mean an instrument of logical analysis, and then widened to its old bounds again so as to give the wielders of this instrument a field for their caustic operations. But if they claim a right to eliminate metaphysics, if their use of language can be used to make nonsense of all theology and much of what has "passed for philosophy"—then why should they draw the line there? The whole of creative literature lies open to them. Professor Ayer is, of course, ready to protect himself against an accusation of such fatuous aggression as this. "It is, in fact, very rare for a literary artist to produce sentences which have no literal meaning. And where this does occur, the sentences are carefully chosen for their rhythm and balance. If the author writes nonsense, it is because he considers it most suitable for bringing about the effects for which his writing is designed."

The first part of this defence seems to me to be false, and I believe that the second part reveals the deep confusion at the heart of the logical positivist premises. The falsity of the first claim is not, perhaps, very important in view of the subsequent admission that poets may legitimately write "nonsense" for specific purposes. But it is worth pointing out that nearly all the poetry of ideas, from Shakespeare's sonnets to Eliot's *Four Quartets*, is riddled with nonsense in the logical positivist sense of the word. Opening the sonnets at random I read:

> "The expense of Spirit in a waste of shame
> Is lust in action. . . ."

and

> "'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,"

and

> "Sin of self-love possesses all mine eye,
> And all my soul and all my every part."

All these are metaphysical assertions; all of them are "nonsense."

But it is the second part of Ayer's claim which is so revealing. It conforms, indeed, readily enough to that devastating concession which the 1948 introduction makes, but it does not at all conform to the general tenor of the book. For what it admits, however unwillingly, is that language can be effectively used in more than one way.

Indeed that bold word "nonsense" is now seen to be a purely technical term—and a most misleading one—for categorising any statement which cannot be verified, in principle, by the senses. Ayer's admission of a poet's license to express himself by means of such nonsense statements gives everything away. For it readmits the old, normal criterion of sense, which has nothing to do with verification but only to do with effective communication. The poet is allowed to indulge in nonsense in order to "bring about the effects for which his writing is designed"—but if he

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does bring about those effects, which are often highly specific ones, then he is not talking nonsense in any normal understanding of the word. "To bring about an effect" is Ayer's rather disingenuous way of saying "to communicate a meaning." And if meaning, or sense, is communicated, then it is stretching the rights of redefinition altogether too far to insist that the poet's words are nevertheless devoid of sense.

It seems to me that all language begins emotively, and that nearly all of it retains that characteristic. This is the language of conversation, no less than of art—a language whose criterion of sense and nonsense has always been that of satisfactory communication. Out of this inherited medium, logicians have tried to carve out a different medium to be used for their own specific, useful, but unusual purposes. They have tried, by a cauterising process of redefinition, to remove the inherited "load" of association from their chosen language and to create, out of our comparatively vague, lengthily evolved units of communication a language as specific as the invented, symbolic language of mathematics. There are obvious reasons why this is a very difficult thing to do, and one of them is that the emotive and associative origin of a given word can never be altogether removed from it. Even the "a prioris," the "hypotheses," and the "propositions" of the logicians carry their own emotive overtones. These words are hypnotic and induce an emotional mood which certainly colours our purely intellectual acceptance or resistance. Indeed, Russell and Whitehead invented a system of logical symbols precisely to overcome such difficulties as this.

Professor Ayer has not found it necessary to do so, and the point is not an important one. For it would, I think, be foolish, extreme, and dangerous to pretend that no system of logic is possible within the inherited medium of language. But that is a very different thing from admitting that the artificial offspring-language of logic has far-reaching rights over the parent, primarily emotive language out of which it was formed. Nor would such rights have been claimed by the old logicians, who very rightly limited their syllogistic methods to the material for which these methods had been designed. It is precisely their vastly swollen claims which differentiate logical positivist philosophers from the logicians who preceded them. If those claims can be reduced again, then there is nothing left of logical positivism except an interesting advance in the methods of logic.

There are, of course, many occasions when non-logicians attempt to use logical language and argument, and on all these occasions the logical positivists have an absolute right to intervene. Their interventions are healthy and useful, and much false reasoning has been very properly exposed by them. But here, too, it seems to me that Professor Ayer's claims are exorbitant. Following his concession of nonsense rights to the poet, he writes that "the metaphysician, however, does not intend to write nonsense. He lapses into it through being deceived by grammar, or through committing errors of reasoning . . . [yet] it is true that although the greater part of metaphysics is merely the embodiment of humdrum errors, there remain a number of metaphysical passages which are the result of genuine mystical feeling; and they may more plausibly be held to have moral or æsthetic value. But, as far as we are concerned, the distinction between (these two kinds of metaphysician) is of no great importance: what is important to us is to realise that even the utterances of the metaphysician who is attempting to expound a vision are literally senseless. . . ."

This is an extraordinary assertion. It is extraordinary, in the first place, to assume that there are no other kinds of metaphysician than the two which Ayer describes. There are, for example, many people who believe in God without claiming to have had any mystical experience of God. Nor, when they announce that God exists, do most of us react to their statement as if they had suddenly said "Abracadabra!" I myself react to it by disagreement, but not by incomprehension. Similarly in the case of mystical writers both they and their readers recognise that the task which they set themselves in attempting to describe their experiences is a dauntingly difficult one. But the evidence shows that some of them are more

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successful than others in this art of interpretation. Something is conveyed even to those who have not shared their experience and, once again, if something is conveyed then it is high-handed to claim that the mystics are talking nonsense. If I observe that two Lithuanians are indulging in apparently successful communication I do not assert that they are talking nonsense simply because I am unable to understand them. And it is as sensible to say that my criterion of sense is expression by means of the English language as to say that the statements of mystics are nonsensical because they cannot be verified by sense-experience.

It is a question, as it has always been, of where the line is to be drawn between these two very different uses of language. Is it to be drawn between Russell and Kant, or between Kant and Hegel, or between Hegel and Nietzsche, or between Nietzsche and Baudelaire, or between Baudelaire and Swinburne? There are many degrees of literalness in the use of language and there is in fact no clear line to be drawn either between philosophers and metaphysicians or between metaphysicians and poets.

So much, indeed, is admitted when Ayer writes, in his second introduction that "it is open to anyone to adopt a different criterion of meaning." But by republishing the unaltered text of *Language, Truth and Logic* he must be accused of failing to draw the full and destructive implications of his admission. For this admision, as I have suggested earlier, deprives the logical positivists of all their claims to be anything more than academic logicians. ". . . unless 'a statement' satisfied the principle of verification, it would not be capable of being understood in the sense in which either scientific hypotheses or common-sense statements are habitually understood." Quite so, but by limiting the application of his criterion to the statements of science and common sense Ayer so reduces his claim that nothing is left of it. A common-sense criterion applies to common-sense remarks. Who could doubt it?

Yet the logical positivists continue to operate far outside the territory of logic, science, and common sense, and their influence is a lethal one. If we return to that curious broadcast circus in which eight members of this school discussed moral responsibility, we are provided with a typical example of the aridity, and even absurdity, of their thought. It was generally agreed by the broadcasters that the word "blame" can only be meaningfully applied to a person, for an action, when the application of blame may result in a future alteration for the better. The intention was to exclude from blame all those who are not responsible for their actions. But the conclusion is absurd. It is reasonable, even self-evident, to say that blame can only *usefully* be applied in cases where it may have future effect, but it can be *meaningfully* applied in a great many other cases. It can be applied, for example, in the case of a man who dies immediately after his crime. By the word "blame" we mean, and we know very well that we mean, a retrospective judgement which has nothing whatever to do with future amendment. It is, as we all know, a very difficult problem, this question of whether, or how much we are responsible for our actions. And it cannot be solved by the sort of linguistic sleight-of-hand which the logical positivists so often use when they are confronted with human problems which are not mere problems of language.

Even in its present more moderate mood this is an analysing disease of language, a more virulent form of that naïve scientific belief that the whole is nothing but its parts which so dismayed and irritated Goethe. It is, as a matter of fact, unlikely that a modern logical-positivist would say "Tush!" to Pascal's great anti-rationalist assertion. That they *should* do so if they accept *Language, Truth and Logic* is perhaps irrelevant. What they do, in fact, is very much more dangerous and obtuse. Instead of leaving us to our nonsense, they will probably tell us that we are, in fact, saying *something*, but that it is not what we think we are saying. "*Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas*" really means, we might be told, that there is an intuitive element in the mind which can sometimes achieve results more quickly and effectively than can conscious ratiocination. And our answer to this is that Pascal's sentence

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means nothing of the kind. It means precisely what it says and we understand it perfectly. In fact the best answer to that old question "What do you mean by that?" is often and legitimately "That! Exactly *that* and nothing else." Many of our statements are autonomous and irreducible, and, far from clarifying them, analysis simply provides an incompetent and misleading translation of them.

Let us hope and pray, then, for a great deal more nonsense, for fecund, poetical, vulnerable theories about such long-forbidden topics as the purpose of life on earth, the nature of man's spirit, and of right and wrong. Let us remember and envy those writers who were so richly fertilised by Plato and Epicurus, by Rousseau, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Let the logical positivists make their savage and legitimate fun of our new pundits whenever it is pretended that their great top-heavy constructions are logically coherent. But let us, for the health and freedom of our imagination, have our rash metaphysicians as well as our dynamiters and sanitary inspectors. The piano-tuners have been in the house for a long time now, and the hour has come for a sonata to be played, or even a concerto.

Donald Davie

Eight Years After

If distance lends enchantment to the view,
Enormities should not be scrutinised.
What's true of white, holds of black magic too;
And, indistinct, evil is emphasised.

Gilfillan, telling how the poet Churchill
"Indulged in nameless orgies," makes us smile;
We think such large unutterables fill
Vapid lacunæ in a frowsy style.

A case however can be made for this:
The queasy Levite need not be ashamed
To have no stomach for atrocities.
We brook them better, once they have been named.

For fearsome issues, being squarely faced,
Grow fearsomely familiar. To name
Is to acknowledge. To acquire the taste
Comes on the heels of honouring the claim.

"Let nothing human be outside my range."
Yet horrors named make exorcisms fail:
A thought once entertained is never strange,
But who forgets the face beyond the pale?

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P. G. Worsthorne

America—Conscience or Shield?

WHEN one considers objectively all the reasons for European anxiety about the United States, it soon becomes apparent that they cannot, in any rational way, account for the depth of anti-Americanism as it exists today. "McCarthyism," disagreements over China, nostalgia for the *pax Britannica*, a debtor's resentment—all of these are to some extent relevant, but even taken together, they do not add up to a valid explanation of that almost passionate feeling of resentment which provokes many Europeans, looking at the United States and the Soviet Union, to say "a plague on both your houses." A common solution to this riddle is to suggest that "we expect so much more" from the United States, which, although quite true, only raises the problem to another level. For what is this "so much more" that we expect from the United States—and are we justified in demanding it?

Almost any random study of the debates on foreign affairs in the House of Commons or the French Assembly, or even casual eavesdropping on conversations in a London or Parisian bus, reveal a fundamental difference in the standards that European opinion demands from the United States and those it exacts from others. For some reason, Europe accepts the idea that America is a country with a difference, from whom it is reasonable to demand an exceptionally altruistic standard of behaviour; it feels perfectly justified in pouring obloquy on shortcomings from this ideal; and also, perhaps inevitably, it seems to enjoy every example of a fall from grace which contemporary America provides. Such a reaction, it may be argued, is inevitable among close friends, who always tend both to exaggerate each other's virtues and feel undue sorrow about each other's faults. But this only brings us back to the original query—why does Europe, in its relations with America, indulge in this quirk of friendship in a way which individual European countries, however close their links, would never think of emulating among themselves?

There is, of course, no simple answer, but some light may be thrown on the problem by considering the drastic transformation of the American role in the world since the end of the last war. Much has been written about the need for America to adjust itself to its new position as the unchallenged leader of an armed coalition facing a grave external threat. But little is ever written about the need for Europe to adjust itself to the new America that must perforce emerge from this American reappraisal. The adjustment called for is radical. Hitherto, despite the worse efforts of Dickens, Mrs. Trollope, and Hollywood in caricaturing American social customs, the United States had retained its role, forged in 1776, as the political conscience of the democratic world. This role has all along been challenged by the intellectuals, and most particularly by the American intellectuals themselves, who have been at pains to point out the difference between the American ideal and the American reality; but, as the ceaseless demand for free immigration suggests, millions of Europeans still regard America both as Eldorado and refuge. Since the Second World War, however, she has

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become the European shield instead of the European conscience. The two functions are mutually incompatible. The responsibilities of the United States for the defence of the free world inevitably tend to weaken her potency as the symbol and touchstone of political liberty, and her role as the conscience of Europe inevitably tends to weaken the effectiveness of the shield. As Mr. George Kennan has persuasively argued, the moralistic approach to foreign policy, necessary for the fulfilment of the conscience-role, is suicidal for a great power with world responsibilities. It would be absurd, for example, for the United States to sacrifice the immense strategic facilities of French North Africa because she disapproved of French colonial rule.

But equally, it should be pointed out, the emphasis on national self-interest as the guide to American policies can scarcely fail to diminish—and indeed is already doing so—the moral influence of the United States in international affairs. Current American policy in Asia is a case very much in point. Until after the war, the United States enjoyed a measure of moral prestige in the Far East because of her anti-colonial tradition, reflected in her vigorous prosecution of the "open door" policy in China. Opposition to European colonialism was admittedly based, to some degree, on self-interest, as the United States wanted free access to Asian markets. (In Latin America, where the boot was on the other foot, the American record is very different.) Today, however, United States championship of "oppressed" peoples' rights against colonial power rings less and less true, for the mid-20th century version of strategic colonialism, as distinct from its 19th century economic counterpart, is one to which the United States is committed by its role as shield of the free world. The search by the Great Powers today is not for closed markets so much as for air and naval bases, and the United States, dedicated to world-wide containment of Communism, needs them more than any other Power. This consideration of national interest is profoundly affecting the United States' attitude to colonial people—and vice-versa. America, more than Britain or France, is rapidly becoming the principal foreign devil in Asian eyes.

THE difficulties, however, are not only limited to America's relations with other countries. The attempt to combine the function of shield with that of conscience has also provoked alarming reactions within the United States itself. In a country such as the United States, where public opinion refuses to recognise standards of morality in international affairs different from those acceptable in human relations, the elevation—under the impact of the Communist menace—of national interest as the only reliable guide to American foreign policy has exercised a considerable influence on moral standards generally, and particularly in domestic politics. Expediency and opportunism have always been accepted in practice in American domestic politics—as in the politics of all countries—but never until recent years have they become accepted in theory as well. Senator McCarthy would always have been popular and successful—he clearly has what it takes—but only recently could he have become respectable, too.

American arguments of expediency are, however, strictly limited in their application. The American Machiavelli is tethered good and fast to the pole of Communism, and any attempt to base foreign policy exclusively on national interest is emphatically rejected by public opinion. It is no good attempting to convince an American audience that the United States' interest would be best served by reaching a compromise with the Communist world. Such suggestions strike against a hard rock of genuine moral idealism which still obtrudes from the sea of confusion into which American public morals have fallen. The damage to American domestic politics already apparent from even the limited adoption by public opinion of the need for expediency and opportunism in foreign policy should warn America's allies against, for example, pressing the United States to recognise Communist China, whose North Korean aggression is still unpunished, on the grounds that the West's global interest demanded such an action. However exasperating it may seem, the fact remains that qualification of what American public opinion believes to be right—or compromise with what it believes to be wrong—in the foreign field

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will be reflected in the American domestic scene.

It seems genuinely shocking to ordinary Americans that so many European liberals should advocate returning Formosa to the Chinese Communists, despite the inevitable massacre of nationalists which would follow, on the Machiavellian grounds that it would promote a Far East settlement; and they do not see how such advocates can at the same time blame McCarthy for arguing that a few breaches in United States' civil liberties do not matter if the Communist conspiracy is defeated. They feel that far more injustice and misery would result from the proposed surrender of Formosa than anything the Senator is likely to bring about. But if this mood should change, if American public opinion were to give up its rigid "moralistic" foreign policy inhibitions, which European opinion tends to regard as preventing "peaceful co-existence," the new "realism" would have repercussions at home of a highly dangerous nature. American idealism is indivisible. If public opinion swallowed its principles because national self-interest demanded a period of co-existence, it would swallow its principles equally easily when McCarthy argued that the United States' security required more and more infractions of civil liberty. With American cynicism as with her idealism, there would be no half-measures, once the idea really caught on.

It is pointless to argue that a mature country must make a difference between domestic and international morality. The fact is that the American people as a whole do not, and, as American foreign policy is tied hand and foot to public opinion, any comprehensive adoption of *Realpolitik* in the foreign field would presuppose a similar opportunism in all sections of American life. Contrary to the general European view, American loyalty to Chiang Kai-Shek, America's old ally and comrade in arms, is a frantic last-ditch battle of American idealism against the almost irresistible pressures and temptations of power politics.

DESPITE these contradictions and strains between the old role of the United States, as a country immunised by geography from the corruption of international power politics, and her new role of world leadership which makes power politics the everyday fare of public life, Europe still seems to expect America to be both shield and conscience at the same time—or, rather, to adopt at any particular moment whichever role suits Europe best.

In Indo-China for example, where British interests appeared to many as more likely to be endangered than secured by American intervention, Britain emphasised America's great anti-colonial tradition and counselled against any action that might run counter to it. Her moral leadership, it was implied, was at stake. In Persia, however, the United States was constantly advised to forget about outdated prejudices against foreign exploitation and to pursue a realistic policy of unwavering support for British policies. American national interest, it was implied, was at stake.

Imperceptibly, however, the facts of international relations have forced the United States to place more and more emphasis on her role as the arsenal, rather than the temple, of democracy. To live up to her commitments in defence of the Western World, she has undertaken an unprecedented military expenditure. The influence of the military mind has increased accordingly. At the same time, in order to strengthen the resolve of the population to shoulder the burden, the international situation has been dramatised into a conflict between absolutes—an ideological struggle with all its implications for national hysteria. This is the price in moral values which must be paid if the American shield is to be made effective. But having encouraged America to undertake the defence of the free world, it is intolerable and self-defeating to continue to measure her actions by standards only suitable for an earlier role.

It is therefore of the first importance that European opinion should attempt to understand the strains imposed on the United States by its new position in the world. Most unprejudiced people reach the essential premises for such an understanding, but then fail to draw the right conclusion from them—or indeed any conclusion at all. They are convinced that

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if Russia could physically impose Communism on the rest of the world, she would; they believe the imposition of Communism would be the end of Western civilisation; they know that Russia has weapons of incalculable destructive power and no moral scruples about their use; and finally, they accept the fact that the United States' strength is in reality the only barrier between Western Europe and Russian domination. All these truths are voiced ceaselessly on every public platform until it has become knowledge that the conjunction at this particular point of history of Communism and the hydrogen bomb places the world in unprecedented peril—so far averted only by the miracle of American industrial strength. Seldom, however, is the conclusion reached that such an awesome responsibility as this situation imposes upon the United States cannot be borne without deep repercussions within the American body politic.

Flaws and weaknesses in the political systems of any other country are today treated with sympathetic indulgence by British newspapers. The French Government has only to fall, for regiments of sympathisers to suggest every conceivable excuse. The brains of Fleet Street spent far more time psychoanalysing Dr. Mossadegh than in condemning him. Comment on Soviet policy usually creaks with the author's effort to see the situation through Mr. Malenkov's eyes. Always the emphasis is on the need to understand. *Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner* is the banner which now flutters wanly across Western Europe. But not apparently for America. America is different. The United States is regarded in Western Europe as a country set apart by its past, which can reasonably be expected to be immune from the evils that have beset other nations. The United States is expected as a matter of course to live up to the twin roles of conscience and shield in a world hovering on the brink of atomic destruction.

It is true that this idealistic expectation has been gradually dissipated by the damaging contrast of what the United States was imagined to be and what day after day it is reported as actually being in the European press. It is, of course, in these invidious contrasts that anti-Americanism breeds most strongly. To allow this process to continue not only destroys American moral influence, but also gravely weakens the effectiveness of her material strength. For disillusion with American values is the Achilles heel in the military alliance.

In the search for the best of both American worlds, Europe is therefore in danger of having the worst of both—neither an effective shield nor a respected conscience. It is surely time, therefore, that Europe should re-examine what it expects from the United States. Our military requirements at once stand out. Western Europe's future depends absolutely on an America mobilised for our defence. What of our moral demands? Is it not time that Europe realised that we shall establish a viable long-term relationship when we regard the United States as just another sovereign state, subject to the same pressures, tempted by the same political vices, in no way specially immunised from the classical disorders that attack all bodies politic, and attack them just when they are at the summit of their strength? But standing in the way of this healthy development is the American legend, which has encouraged a view of the American past that inevitably distorts any valid appreciation of the American present.

LIKE all legends, the American legend has a substratum of truth, but the emphasis on the heroic aspects of American development gives a somewhat misleading and idyllic picture. European countries, of course, also weave legends about their origins, but unlike the United States their origins occur in the distant past, and are shrouded in the mists of pre-history. The legend of King Arthur and his Knights, for example, colours the British attitude to the past, but no one, disappointed at the absence of such perfect chivalry in Westminster today, concludes that British public life has gone to the dogs. Legends should serve to popularise an ideal, not to record a historical condition. But since the foundations of the American nation took place in modern times, the legends of the Pilgrim and Founding Fathers have been taken far more seriously—

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have been taken indeed not as legends but as history.

Few historical events, of course, lend themselves so worthily to the creation of a legend as the first Puritan settlements on the American continent. The astounding success of the Pilgrim Fathers in founding religious communities by rigid adherence to certain social dogmas in the face of grave physical difficulties encouraged a belief in Providence—a belief that the continent has been kept in reserve by the Deity and had just, as Tocqueville put it, "risen from beneath the waters of the deluge to fulfil God's purpose." The Puritan communities were convinced that this new land was God's own country, and that their miraculous success was proof of God's approval. This assumption is crucial to the future development of the American legend, as it has been responsible for a unique American conviction: namely, that America came fully formed into the world with an ideal polity established from the outset and approved by divine intervention. What is overlooked, however, and where the legend parts company with history, is that the very success of the Puritan experiment brought about its own nemesis. By the time of the third generation, the Puritan communities showed unmistakable signs of believing that the glorious fruits of the new continent did not only justify their religious and social ideals, but also their practices. As Professor Daniel J. Boorstin writes in his brilliant study, *The Genius of American Politics*, their success induced the Puritans "gradually to seek their standards in their own experience, to make what they had accomplished the yard-stick of what they ought to have accomplished." Pride had overtaken Providence, with the significant consequence—to be seen all through American history—of an inclination to judge institutions and personalities, not by any absolute criterion, but rather to believe that, so far as America is concerned, what "is" is right until it proves itself, by failing to work, to be wrong.

The American Revolution is also generally taught more as a legend than history. The popular picture emphasises all those features of the Revolution which place it in the great liberal tradition of the Enlightenment. The immortal preamble to the Declaration of Independence, which outlines the rights of man, is all that most people ever bother to study in that famous document. Its substance, which is a detailed, legalistic catalogue of particular and practical grievances, not of the human race, but of a particular group of colonies at a particular time, is largely ignored. As a result, the popular impression of the Revolution is of a successful movement towards national independence and a triumph of the principles of the natural rights philosophy—a combination, in fact, of the twin ideals of the 19th century European progressives. George Washington is credited with all the passion for liberty and equality of the French Revolution —without any of its excesses: and also with the nationalistic fervour of Cavour and Bismarck—without any of their chauvinism. This, of course, is very much an idealised picture and tends to give American history far too much of a flying start. Any sober assessment of the Revolution cannot fail to notice that what was worrying the colonists was not the rights of man, nor indeed the rights of Americans, but principally the rights of Englishmen. No taxation without representation was not a right of mankind, but a particular right of Englishmen. That Burke and not Tom Paine was the real spokesman for the American Revolution in no way detracts from its glory, although it changes the emphasis. A country which arose from a legalistic concern to preserve old rights, rather than create new ones, cannot indulge in the conviction that in a few brief months in 1776 a miracle created a whole new polity, which no longer needed to be burdened by the traditional political ills of the old world. This idealised version of the Revolution and its principal spokesmen has resulted in subsequent American history being interpreted, not as a slow, halting attempt to reach a distant goal, but a gradual decline from a summit already scaled.

The third pivotal period in American history —the Civil War—can be shown to have undergone a similar process of idealisation. It is now common knowledge of course that the Civil War was not simply a battle to free the slaves,

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but was also a battle to preserve the Union. But even this relatively recent injection of realism into the legend tends to confuse the issue. For the slave question *is* of very great significance—not in illustrating Northern enthusiasm for civil rights and human equality, but rather in illustrating the remarkably pragmatic approach to this controversial subject. The role of the abolitionists is seen to be more and more marginal. The real argument on the slavery issue centred not so much on whether slavery was good or bad, moral or immoral, but on whether it was a viable social system, furthering the welfare of the community. Lincoln, it should be remembered, repeatedly declared himself to be no abolitionist. The emancipation of the slaves was forced on him, as Boorstin reminds us, as a wartime necessity, and he did what he could to postpone and avoid it.

It is of course possible to argue that any analysis of turning points in the history of any European country would show equal idealisation and over-simplification. The Whig interpretation of history, indeed, written at the same period as the popular version of American history was written, tends to create a similar legendary heroism about the British struggle for Parliamentary supremacy. The effect, however, of partial historical judgements of a relatively modern period in British development cannot compare with the effect of a distorted version of the very origins of American destiny. From the version of these three passages of American development outlined above, the legend has grown up among Americans that the United States came into existence with a perfect polity approved by God, cut itself off by the Revolution from the old-world dilemma between authority and freedom, and once and for all vindicated the principle of equality in the Civil War. This version of American history has become an article of faith among ordinary Americans and, although subjected to a battery of historical criticism, the faith remains strikingly vigorous. This idealised picture of a fairy-tale land has been purposely taught in American schools in a highly successful effort to cast a spell over the millions of immigrants, and produce out of their multifold origins a new man, the American, instead of the Italian-American, Greek-American, etc. The fantastic extent to which this educational process has succeeded can be judged by the enthusiasm with which first-generation Americans condemn certain practices as un-American, as if Americanism was a new, comprehensive scale of values, in some way different from the traditional evaluations of right and wrong in the countries from which they sprang.

BUT why, it may be asked, has this American legend become so easily adopted outside the United States? To some extent, the answer may perhaps lie in the fact that in the 18th and 19th centuries advocates of the Enlightenment had nowhere else to place their hopes. Their overestimate of the American achievement was the measure of the European failure. America in the last century became the favourite of the liberals in much the same way, and with almost as little real basis, as the U.S.S.R. later became the hope of the 20th century "progressives." This natural wishful thinking of liberal Europe, reinforced by the absence of any long history of mutual antagonisms, led many Europeans to accept the American version of American history to a truly remarkable degree. It is significant, for example, that in the teaching of American history in Britain there is a total absence of villains. Whereas the histories of other foreign countries are for the most part taught as a catalogue of dubious decisions taken by dubious characters, with strength of purpose almost the only virtue recognised (Richelieu, Napoleon, Frederick the Great), American history becomes a tale of unmitigated virtue, starting with George Washington and going down to Franklin Roosevelt, even to Harry Truman. Most English schoolboys would be hard put to name an American villain before Senator McCarthy. President Harding, for example, is passed over in polite silence, although if he had been President of France it is unlikely that his striking defects would have been so kindly treated by British writers.

Until after the Second World War, there-

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fore, America remained largely unchallenged as the conscience of democracy, the haven of freedom, and an oasis of prosperity in an increasingly impoverished world. As in all these fields there was concrete justification for these high estimates, it became an axiom of the popular European attitude to America, as much as it was an axiom of the American view of itself, that providence and nature had made America in God's image—God's own country.

This view could only last while three conditions made it tolerable: first, free emigration which, while constantly reinvigorating the European image of Eldorado, never tarnished the image with envy; secondly, European cultural superiority dissolved any material inferiority in a happy conviction that more cultural roses grew on our tired soil than in the sterilised climate of the new world; thirdly, there was sufficient political and economic independence of Europe from America, and only an insignificant clash of interests. In a peculiar way, Europe found it comforting to idealise the United States, and drew vicarious satisfaction from fathering on the world such a virile offspring.

Today, however, emigration has virtually terminated. It is impossible to overestimate the profound effect of this fact on European public opinion with regard to the United States. All the most striking successes of the American experiment, its wealth, higher standard of living, free opportunities, have become sources of envy instead of encouragement, and America is becoming, instead of the haven of the under-privileged, the last refuge of the over-privileged. Secondly, American cultural dominance is nearly complete, and, thirdly, owing to the Cold War, the political and economic relations between America and Europe are now those of enforced familiarity. With the transformation of these three conditions, Europe has been forced to take a new look at America. And just when America was coming under such close scrutiny, it was itself passing through a period of extreme internal strain. European opinion therefore has been brought down to earth with a particularly hard bump.

But the shudders of despairing alarm which sweep over Europe whenever McCarthyism comes to the forefront of the news would be alleviated if its antecedents were better known. The only reason why we don't think the end of the world is coming with each new thunder clap is because we have seen it survive similar storms before. The fact is that intolerance and violence play a large part in American history and always have. McCarthyism is nothing new. When people talk about the climate of fear created by the congressional committees, it is worth recalling Professor Wriston's recent reminder that, when Jefferson was elected President of the United States, the militancy of his atheism was so notorious that people hid their Bibles. Throughout American history, racial and religious intolerance against Quakers, Jews, Negroes, Spanish-Americans, and other minority groups has been a recurring feature. The fanatical anti-foreign movement, the Know-Nothing, could in 1854 command eight members of the United States Senate and almost half the Lower House. (Senator McCarthy certainly can't do that.) The cruel and sinister Ku Klux Klan, the powerful anti-Catholic Nativists who burnt down Catholic churches and schools in Philadelphia, Father Coughlin's rabid anti-Semitism—all at different times seemed, as Senator McCarthy does now, to cast a shadow over the land of the free. The assault on civil liberty after the First World War was far more serious than anything happening in America today. Francis Biddle has recently pointed out that nearly 22,000 people were prosecuted under the Sedition and Espionage Laws from 1917 to 1920, and 877 were convicted. (A score or so have been convicted under the anti-Communist Smith Act.) The notorious Palmer raids in 1920 have no contemporary parallel. The disgraceful behaviour of congressional committees to witnesses has many precedents, of which the occasion when Mr. J. P. Morgan, head of the famous bank, had a midget popped on his knee and a news photograph taken, is only the best known. As to character assassination, the current practice sets no rock-bottom standard, and does not compare at all unfavourably with the accusations levelled against

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Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln in their days. The abuse by lesser men of their great contemporaries is lost in the swell of history. Who remembers today that Jefferson was accused of being "the promoter of national disunion, national insignificance, public disorder and discredit," that he was the "friend of anarchy," and a "plagiarist," or that a northern member of Lincoln's Cabinet called him in public "a long-armed baboon" and "a great hairy ape?"

A catalogue of the seamy side of American history does not excuse the present blemishes, but to those millions outside America whose first serious glance at the real America brings them face to face with McCarthyism, it is salutary to be reminded that McCarthyism is not new, and is not even stronger than it has been in the past. This realisation would prevent that attitude of disillusion about America which springs from seeing the past as too rosy and the present as too black. The forces of political democracy and human decency have consistently triumphed in America in the past. Nothing is so misleading as to suggest that, by some peculiar virtue of the American Continent, these triumphs have been unopposed. There is a general tendency among historians to underestimate the strength of the defeated in outlining the course of American history—a tendency which has resulted in a dangerous overlooking of the undemocratic, inegalitarian pressures which have all along fought neck and neck with their counterparts. This distorted picture of the past both ill-prepares Americans to deal with their present dangers, and ill-prepares Europeans to see the present struggle in America in true proportions.

Idealisation of the American past also tends to hide the way in which generations of Americans have rectified evils in their body politic. As a realistic study of the slavery controversy suggests, the most effective incentive to put an end to the practice was its visible and damaging material consequences. The Abolitionists who based their arguments on moral grounds tended to arouse equally eloquent opposition, also based on moral grounds. The same is true of McCarthyism. But once the American people become convinced that McCarthyism is actually weakening the United States, for example by undermining morale in the Foreign Service or reducing recruitment in the Army, etc.—once they can see tangible damage rather than moral outrage —their reactions may well prove far more disastrous to the Senator's fortunes. Quite contrary to the picture painted by the American legend, the American tends to fight best, not against violation of abstract principles, but when the violation of principles actually begins to bear tangible fruit.

I have attempted to present the case for a new attitude to the United States, one more suitable for her present role than the old starry-eyed attitude of admiration based on ignorance which, in the new circumstances of the post-war world, is fast turning into hostility based on ignorance. America has a chequered past, and will no doubt have a chequered future, and the sooner we accept this inevitable fact the sooner we will be able to take full advantage of her manifold blessings without harping on the blemishes. Legend created an American God. The God has failed. But unlike the Communist God which, on closer examination, turned out to be a devil, the American God has just become human. Criticism, irritation, doubt, disagreements, all such sentiments towards America are fully justified. But the mounting tide of bitterness, despairing disillusion, and even, in some quarters, hatred, are totally misplaced, and spring from illusions about America that never had any real justification.

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On Poetry: A Discussion

Dylan Thomas • James Stephens • Gerald Bullett

[The following is the text of a BBC broadcast on June 18th, 1946. The discussion was one of a weekly series called *Books and Writers*, produced by Mr. Gerald Bullett.]

Bullett: Tonight we have with us two poets, James Stephens and Dylan Thomas. James Stephens has been writing poetry for something like forty years, and when he's not writing it he's speaking it or talking about it. Our second guest, Dylan Thomas, leapt into fame some years before the war as the possessor of an exciting and highly original talent. These two are going to discuss poetry together, what it is, and how, and why.

Poetry can't be defined: it can only be pointed at. But, just to start the ball rolling, let's begin with something easier. The relation, if any, between poetry and verse. The popular idea has always been that all verse is poetry and all poetry is verse—in fact that the two words are interchangeable. Any comments?

Thomas: That of course is nonsense.

Stephens: There's some truth in that. A very large part of the produced verse that we have is just prose, shaped and quickened and vivified. A good deal of rhetoric passes for poetry, because it is written in verse form—"Roll on thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll, a thousand fleets sail over thee, Man marks the earth with ruin: the something or other that thunder strike the walls of rock-bound cities, bidding nations quake and monarchs tremble in their own dug-outs," and all the rest of it—it's just excellent prose, no secret about it, no music, just measure and vehemence. Or the Macaulay ballads—"But with a noise like thunder fell every loosened beam, and like a dam the mighty wreck lay stretched athwart the stream," and the rest of it. It's magnificent, said the Frenchman one time, but it isn't war. So, with a vast area of our printed verse—some of it is very good indeed, but it's prose, disguised in the casts-off of verse. Get a copy of the longer poems of the English. More than three-quarters of these are prose, and bad prose at that.

Thomas: "Paradise Lost"? "Ancient Mariner"? "Don Juan," which is really all good *verse*? But anyway, we want to know what poetry is. All I know is that it is memorable words-in-cadence which move and excite me emotionally. And, once you've got the hang of it, it should always be better when read aloud than when read silently with the eyes. Always.

Stephens: Poetry does two things, according to Keats. It must astonish and delight. If it doesn't do both, it does neither.

Bullett: It doesn't consist of fine sentiments or great thoughts. It's something existing in its own right, something made out of words, a new creation—and the magic of it has something to do, hasn't it, with elements that are inherent in human speech—

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measure and cadence and so on? I don't expect an answer, but I should like to ask whether the *lyrical* quality is or is not the very essence of poetry?

Stephens: The poet is a fellow who can take hold of a thought and make it *sing*. Anyone who can compose to the measure of some kind of a dance is a poet.

Thomas: I hope you're listening, Tin Pan Alley!

O Soo
I'm blue as blue
baby
I love yoo
Maybe
Maybe
oo
love me . . .

Stephens: Nevertheless, I repeat, anyone who can compose to the measure of some kind of dance is a poet. All who write epics, and elegies, and lyrics and epi-and-prothalamiums, the wise-guys who write songs for music-halls, verses for Christmas cards, and mottoes for crackers—all these are poets, unless, of course, you can point out that they are just disguising prose in verse. Some of them are good, some not so good, and some are no good, but they are all of that Mystery, they are of that Licence. They are poets, which those Macaulays and people are not. The bits of things they give cannot be given at all in prose, or in any other form that even the "bad" poet has given it. Not even Shakespeare could tackle twinkle, twinkle little star: he could not rewrite it, or improve it, or do anything whatever to it except, perhaps, to deplore it. Lots of poetry is poetry, but is no good.

Thomas: I'm not going to argue with all that. Sometimes I just sits and thinks. I agree that music-hall songs can be good poetry—so can limericks, drawing- or tap-room—but I don't think cracker-mottoes etc. ever have been. I think, Stephens, you must be pulling my (comparatively) young leg. The younger generation used to be called, by their elders, flippant. Not any longer. It's we, now, who deprecate their flippancy. I feel rather like the little pedantically reproving girl addressing Matthew Arnold in Max Beerbohm's picture: "Why, Uncle Matthew, oh why, will not you be always wholly serious?" I'm all for taking the *serious* nonsense out of one's appreciation of poetry; I hate, as much as you do, the hushed voice and hats-off attitude, but I don't like the double-bluffing approach either that pretends to think that "I'm one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit" is better poetry than, say, the serious, unfashionable work of Cowper or Francis Thompson. It's just very different poetry.

Bullett: As Chairman, I'm not supposed to have any opinions on anything. But I feel bound to say at this point that I think it's very perverse—and very confusing for the ordinary listener—to call such things poetry at all—such things as "I'm one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit," and the like. I'm not being snobbish about it either. I'm merely asking that words should be used in their common meaning. Auden, I remember, some years ago brought out an anthology in which

I have no pain, dear mother, now,
But Oh I am so dry,
Connect me to a brewery
And leave me here to die—

was put next to an exquisite lyric by Yeats—the idea being, I suppose, that both equally belonged to the category of poetry. That, I think, is nonsense. One may enjoy music-hall rhymes, now and again you get something very entertaining in that line, but why muddle the man in the street by pretending that they belong to the same category of art as Keats's *Nightingale* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*? Things aren't poetry just because we happen to like them. One may like ginger pop, but that's no no reason for pretending it's the same thing as Sauterne or Montrachet. Poetry, I suggest, is something that happens when language is used with so high a degree of exactness as to express something otherwise inexpressible.

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Thomas: Almost anything one says about poetry is as true and important as anything else that anyone else has said. Some people react *physically* to the magic of poetry, to the moments, that is, of authentic revelation, of the communication, the *sharing*, at its highest level, of personal experience; they say they feel a twanging at their tear-ducts, or a prickling of the scalp, or a tickling of the spine, or tremors in what they hope is their heart. Others say that they have a kind of a sort of a vague feeling somewhere that "this is the real stuff." Others claim that their "purely æsthetic emotion" was induced by certain assonances and alliterations. And some are content merely to say, as they said of the first cinematographic picture, "By God, it moves." And so, of course, by God it does, for that is another name for the magic beyond definition.

Stephens: Let's get down to it. Yes, there's a transforming that takes place in poetry. It is transformed right away from prose. AE (George Russell) once said to me—Poetry is written on the Mount of Transfiguration. Fine poetry sometimes subsists on nothing. When Chaucer says, "The barren isle standing in the sea" he is next door to saying nothing, but I want to keep that line for ever. Or Marvell, with his "Annihilating all that's made to a green thought in a green shade." When Blake says "Ah Sunflower, weary of time," I'm satisfied that he is where he wants to go. Or "Speak silence with thy glimmering eyes, and wash the dusk with silver." There is no sense in it, but who wants sense when he can get poetry instead? So, also "Darkness falls from the air: queens have died young and fair: dust hath closed Helen's eyes." Anyone can say, well, what about it? Why there's nothing about it, except that something or other, quite unnamed and unnameable, has been transformed, and is here only by grace.

Thomas: In other words, the magic in a poem is always accidental. No poet would labour intensively upon the intricate craft of poetry unless he hoped that, suddenly, the accident of magic would occur. He *has* to agree with Chesterton that the miraculous thing about miracles is that they *do* sometimes happen. And the best poem is that whose worked-upon unmagical passages come closest, in texture and intensity, to those moments of magical accident.

Bullett: Let's have a few more examples, shall we?

Stephens: When the Abbé Bremond wrote his famous book, *Pure Poetry*, he gave seven examples of pure poetry from the French, and all the other examples, millions of 'em, were from the English. "And through the glass window shines the sun, how should I love, and I so young? The bailey beareth the bell away, the lily, the lily, the rose I lay." The most exciting and incomprehensible verse in English. "Is she kind as she is fair? For beauty lives with kindness." "By shallow rivers, to whose falls melodious birds sing madrigals." "Fair love, let us go play: apples be ripe in my garden" and in one line love is switched from Piccadilly Circus to the Garden of Eden. But there are so many, and every line of them original, and unique, and properly inexpressible.

Thomas: And there's this to be said too. Poetry, to a poet, is the most rewarding work in the world. A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape and significance of the universe, helps to extend everyone's knowledge of himself and the world around him.

Bullett: And a man who is himself a poet, people like you, Dylan Thomas, and Stephens, have a double interest in poetry. They make it and they read it. They're at both ends at once, the giving end and the receiving end.

Stephens: Let me tell you a story. It's a true one, but good, for all that.

Bullett: Go ahead.

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Stephens: I called on Yeats one day: he was in a bad temper. He pointed to a pile of books and explained that he wasn't going to read them, or do anything about them. He waved his arms, "People think," he complained, "that I love poetry, and that I must be very glad to get some. I don't love poetry," he went on: "Why should I? It's the hardest work in the world, the most exacting, and the least rewarding that any intelligent person can undertake. Moreover," he went on, "I'm not interested in the least in other men's verse, I've trouble enough with my own. It's like those love stories in novels: as if we all didn't get misery enough out of our own love-lunacies without having to weep and wail about the fictitious love-yowling of people that never existed. I can't conceive," said Yeats, "how any working poet can take the smallest interest in anyone else's verse, and, besides, out of any hundred poets ninety nine and a half of them are no good, and the whole hundred of them despise, and even loathe, every other poet that lives."

Bullett: Just a minute, Dylan Thomas wants to cut in. We have about three minutes to go.

Thomas: I can only believe those were casual, throw-away remarks, little spurts of annoyance never intended to be remembered. Anyway, he contradicts himself in his essays and letters any number of times, and in his rather erratic *Oxford Book of Modern Verse.*

Stephens: Yeats was in a very bad temper: "Besides," he said, "England, Ireland and Scotland hate poetry and hate poets, and they only buy the stuff as table-ornaments anyway. Do people buy your stuff, Stephens?" he enquired. "Oh, yes," I answered: "the whole forty-two millions of 'em clubbed together and bought nine of my books last year. In fact," I went on proudly, "no year has passed in which I haven't made from seven and six to twelve bob: beat that if you can, W. B.! There was," I continued reminiscently, "one marvellous year in which I knocked fifteen shillings out of my fellow men." These intimate truths put Yeats into a wonderfully good temper.

Thomas: I think there's an inverted snobbery—and a suggestion of bad logic—in being proud of the fact that one's poems sell very badly. *Of course,* nearly *every* poet wants his poems to be read by as many people as possible. Craftsmen don't put their products in the attic. And contempt for the public, which is composed of potential readers, is contempt for the profound usefulness of your own craft. Go on thinking that you don't *need* to be read, and you'll find that it may become quite true: no one *will* feel the need to read it, because it is written for yourself alone; and the public won't feel any impulse to gatecrash such a private party. Moreover, to take no notice of the work of your contemporaries is to disregard a whole *vital* part of the world you live in, and necessarily to devitalise your own work: to narrow its scope and possibilities: to be half dead as you write. What's more, a poet is——

Bullett: I don't want to interrupt but we have only one minute left.

Thomas: What's more, a poet is a poet for such a very tiny bit of his life; for the rest, he is a human being, one of whose responsibilities is to know and feel, as much as he can, all that is moving around and within him, so that his poetry, when he comes to write it, can be his attempt at an expression of the summit of man's experience on this very peculiar and, in 1946, this apparently hell-bent earth.

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Sylvia Sprigge

The German Scene

Late Summer: 1954

The First Day

WE CROSS the frontier, coming from Milan, at Basel. Green-coated frontier police and passport officers are brisk and courteous. Whatever their war experiences, this afternoon it is "*Die Pässe, meine Herrschaften*" to all, and "*Gute Reise*" to each.

In this wettest of summers, the still twisted girders of Freiburg and Karlsruhe stations offer little shelter to big crowds of waiting travellers. This is the French occupation zone. In the fields and orchards, rather inadequately protected labourers are busy. In the goods yards, the wagons are stacked with agricultural machinery —but not for them, for export.

Coblenz—the great Rhine narrows. A German traveller enters our compartment and wants to talk about Rüdesheim, Bingen, the Pfalz island, and *die Loreley*. I don't say I have been here a dozen times before, years ago. He goes on gaily: "It's all mined, you know . . . against the Russians, by the Allies." Maybe; fortunately we have to get out.

Bonn, the "Capital"

CAPITALS normally grow. Bonn had to be chosen; it is in the British-occupied zone; it was less destroyed than many Rhineland cities, and I suppose it offered more scope for building than other Rhineland towns.

The little early 18th century palace that is Bonn University, the green slopes down to the Rhine, Beethoven's three-storied house, the Cathedral and the Kreuz Kirche—all are there still; but the city has trebled its population and will soon be indistinguishable from Godesberg five miles away. All the space between is being built over. There is a vast American garden city at Poppelsdorf, for the U.S. Control Commission Staff, soon to become "the Embassy staff"; there is our High Commissioner's brand-new residence, also soon to become "the Embassy." What a functional horror it is! The CC British staff who live at Godesberg (all round the "Peace-in-our-time" Hotel Dreesen) call it the soap factory, because it looks like one. It fits in well with the even larger factory going up nearby, to house the new Federal Foreign Office, which looks about the size of Dolphin Square.

Four miles from the centre of Bonn, in a vast one-time Physics Institute, is the Parliament; its restaurant, the rallying point for makers and breakers of news. "It's tramp, tramp, tramp up to the pulpit," says one deputy, "and tramp, tramp, tramp back again, and the same for the man who speaks after you: no heckling, no interruption. It is so dull. I like your Parliament. I was in London last year. Question-time, I liked especially."

My complaining deputy is a leading member of the Free Democrats, a party still inside Herr Adenauer's coalition cabinet, as I write. But he is a fairly free-lance member, and quite a traveller: he was in Karlshorst the other day at the Soviet Headquarters in East Germany. We talked a lot about "Russia, Germany's

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permanent neighbour," about increasing trade with Russia; for, "One day" he said, "German reconstruction will be ended and then we shall have men available for industry and will need still bigger exports." He thought German rearmament could wait. Another deputy (Social Democrat) complained of what he called Herr Adenauer's "Vatican policy of the extremest possible cold war." True, there had been wonderful American aid and investments in Germany, but "ample trade facilities in return." Europe? Western Europe's capacity to defend itself? His reply to such questions was "Maybe . . . but not until East and West Germany are united."

"German reunification" is the theme-song in unofficial Bonn in 1954. I felt ignorant, not having read about it anywhere. Felt it was a plum which has been carefully tended and ripened by the Russians, in the hope that Bonn will pluck it.

German Geography, 1954

TEN YEARS after the great division of Germany, the fretting has begun. Ten years after Potsdam the great treks of population have more or less been housed and given work. Legislation and a colossal effort by West Germans have achieved this. Federal or West Germany now numbers 50 million instead of 38 million. Central and East Germany, both under Soviet occupation, number 18 million. West Berlin numbers 2½ million. East Berlin 1¾ million. Geographically it is as though York were temporarily the capital of England, Scotland, Wales, and the Midlands, all under "Allied occupation," while Southern England and one-third of London were under Soviet occupation. The "iron" curtain would be running roughly in a line from the Wash to Bristol, and in a ring round West London.

The iron in the German curtain seems to be melting this summer of 1954. Bonn talk goes round and round in unhappy circles like this: "Only supremely military minds could have worked out such a ridiculous partition. . . ." "Only a man as sick as Roosevelt was at Yalta could have agreed to it. . . ." "But it was never *meant* to be permanent. . . ." "But it has *become* permanent. . . ." "After all, Poland was carved up for 150 years from the end of the 18th century until 1918. . . ." "Germany isn't Poland. We Germans can *do* something about this. . . ." "What—at the price the Russians are asking for reunification?" "Don't worry; the Russian Army is now at the Elbe, so are the Allied Armies. Neither will budge, for a very long time. . . ."

Bonn Undergraduates

SPENT the morning in a bookshop. Undergraduates came and went, for all the world like those at Heffer's or at Blackwell's, perhaps a little taller, a little fairer. Not a Jewish face. Thought of the children who died with their parents at Auschwitz and other places, who would otherwise be of university age now. Also thought that a society with no Jews in it tends to be dull. Am told there are 25,000 Jews left in Germany. There used to be 3½ million. Also told that Mannheim chose a returned Jew for its mayor after the war; that he died the other day; and that the whole town turned out for his funeral. Why not, indeed?

After dinner, one night, to an undergraduates' debate on German East-West relations, addressed by two German members of Parliament: one a Christian-Democrat called Herr Lemmer; one a Social Democrat, Herr Kühn.

About 500 students, mostly young men, were there. Said the Social Democrat: "The Soviet Union is our permanent neighbour. If we don't want war (*applause*) we should take the initiative ourselves to re-establish relations with Russia. I cannot support Adenauer, if he denies this necessity. . . . Our roots lie in the West, and our human relationships are there, but contacts with the Soviet Union are all-important. I am profoundly thankful for the Leipzig *Kirchentag** (*applause*). Let us have many more such East-West encounters, congresses of East and West musicians, doctors

* Leipzig, in the Russian zone with its 800,000 inhabitants, invited the German Lutheran Church to hold its annual "Church Meeting" there in July this year. The Church accepted, and no less than 10,000 Germans from West Germany crossed into the Russian zone to attend the five days of prayers, hymns, and sermons.

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scientists, teachers; let us all meet often" (*applause*).

Said the Christian-Democrat; "The division of our Fatherland and its reunification need not be, from the start, a matter of war (*applause*). We Germans should not always be under suspicion when we want to review our relations with our neighbours. If we agree that negotiation can achieve reunification, then the time is very close now to prepare for negotiation. . . . The final communiqué at the Berlin Conference this February revealed most complacently that no solution other than partition was envisaged. But the other solution is to get our sovereignty back and to negotiate" (*prolonged applause*).

One student after another, with some hesitation, stepped on to the platform to speak. One asked: "But what have we to offer the Russians in return for reunification?" Another: "We feel this East-West problem every single day in our lives, but we mustn't be afraid." Another: "We must have sovereignty this year." The last speaker was the Mayor of Bonn who had recently been at the Leipzig *Kirchentag*. He said West Germany was now immune from Communism (*applause*). "It is far more likely that our influence over there will be dangerous, than that their influence among us will make any progress. Stone by stone we must build a bridge through the swamp of East-West relations. . . ." Then the Mayor pronounced the sentence everyone was waiting for: "The price of German reunification will have to be a military non-attachment to either side: no military commitments in East or West" (*applause*).

Was told such meetings are taking place in many German universities this autumn.

About Duelling

FRIENDS who live near the headquarters of a revived "Students Corps" said that duelling with sabres took place on some afternoons in the garden of this headquarters. They said: "The old men are to blame: they have given their names for the collection of funds from the new rich industrialists. They have made committees for re-forming the Corps." Houses cost about 33,000 marks, and two had so far been newly equipped with all the usual club facilities. "The old men believe that the drawing of blood and the retention of a good facial scar is a fine introduction to manhood." Until this year the Rectors of Bonn University, who change every two years, had opposed the re-forming of the *Studentenkorps*, but there was no law against the Corps, only one under which one party may denounce another for inflicting bodily harm, "and this of course no Corps dueller would do."

Train to Berlin

EVERY other window of our train to Minden has a six-inch transparent label on it with the word "Berlin" five times, and across the whole, "*Immer dran denken*" ("Always remember it"). Notice that passing trains have it too. Through the verdant Ruhr and Wupper valleys and the immensely active Ruhr towns: Gevelsburg, Hagen, Schwerte, Unna, on we go past hundreds of busy high streets, full shops, smoking chimneys, laden goods trains, and crowded platforms, filled with heavy-industry workers and their wives and their very obedient children.

After dawn I rub my eyes, looking out at Magdeburg in the Soviet Zone (which stretches for 200 miles between West Germany and Berlin). It is true then, what the refugees and the newspapers say? The wheat hereabouts *is* scraggy; the houses *are* unpainted, drab. Gone are the gay curtains and the bright window boxes of Bonn and Cologne. Why is it that wherever Slavs occupy land, a pall descends? Why are the early buses and yellow post-office vans in Magdeburg old, dirty, and rickety? The villages in the great flat plain beyond the Elbe have no new houses, and plenty of empty shells of houses.

There's a Soviet barracks with fifty pairs of army pants hanging on the line. How the boys from Rostov, Gorki, or Kiev must resent this job: almost as much as they are resented. Have a notion that their Naafis are not much fun either; not nearly as good as ours, or the Maisons de France, or the fanciful, gay American Post Exchanges.

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Berlin—The Stammtisch

All the Bonn deputies and land representatives have been here this weekend, every one dressed ceremoniously in grey-striped trousers, grey waistcoats, black coats, and grey silk ties (someone said "a thousand wee Stresemanns") to re-elect Theodor Heuss for a further term of five years as President of the German Federal Republic. Twelve Communist members of the Bonn Parliament, however, came in double-breasted blue suits; for seven of them it was their last act as M.P.'s, for they lost their seats in the recent Rhine-Westphalian elections.

So much has been happening. President Heuss has driven through West Berlin, bareheaded in the rain, in an open car. He has made many (and notable) speeches after his re-election, at the commemoration of the 20th July revolt against Hitler ten years ago, at the annual meeting of "*Unteilbares Deutschland*."* He and many others have been to Dahlem Church twice to hear political sermons by Bishop Dibelius and Pastor Poelcher. Otto John has "gone over" histrionically, when anyone can walk over or take the underground into East Berlin. The Social Democrats have been holding their annual Party Conference in Berlin for the first time. Mr. Clement Attlee appeared at it and addressed them as "comrades," with whom it was good to be in Berlin, "that city which bravely withstood the Soviet attempt to starve it out in 1948." The air-lift of ten months remains in West Berlin's new history, memorably engraved, still giving a certain pride and individuality to this immensely bombed city. Berlin is to hold an international architectural Exhibition in 1956, on its most bombed sites in the Tiergarten area.

Subjects are not lacking for discussion at the *Stammtisch*.† It is 11.30 p.m. A young friend takes me. I am introduced to two older men, sit down, and order a glass of Niersteiner. We are five foreigners and twenty Germans, mostly young leader-writers in dailies, weeklies, and monthlies. A young man is thumping the table, so the glasses tremble. "You're wrong, my dear Karl (*thump*). Russia is digging in in Central Europe. Russia has no intention of pulling out. Till 1953 the Soviet idea was to dig in by boosting the German Communist Party, training it to take over the whole of Germany. That's been a bit of a failure: mainly because Western Germany has recovered so wonderfully, and our people have come over in droves from the Soviet Zone. (*Interruption:* "Yes, three hundred and fifty a day, even now.") In West Germany, Communist votes are falling at every election. So now the new Russian line is German neutrality—co-existence. You ask what we are to do? We must negotiate with the Russians, without being in the least bit impressed with their enticements."

Another man ("lately come over from the East," whispers my friend) puts up his hand. A dim elderly figure down at the far end of the table motions him to speak. Precise, brief, he says: "Whichever way one looks at it, West German capitulation to Soviet plans for German neutrality would be a capitulation of Western Europe." Another, "Yes, we've suddenly become important again. The idea is that Europe can't be defended without us." The ex-Communist, brief and precise, says coldly, "Every country which Russia has ever invited to neutrality has become a designated victim of Soviet aggression." There is a pause in which little groups break into chat. At my end the talk drifts to John (pronounced *Yoen* in German). "Bonn's all wrong about John—of course, he went over and wasn't kidnapped. He was suffering from an *Antifakomplex*." Puzzled, I whisper to my friend, "What's that?" and she whispers back to me, "It's when . . ." and describes how some people were so bitten with their own anti-Hitlerism that they proceeded to become totalitarian on the other side: seeing Nazis in every German, and a Nazi plot in every Allied move to consolidate Western Germany. Someone near me says, "I don't agree about John's *Antifakomplex*. The Nazis coined that word. John may have been stupid, and probably is. None

* Literally "Indivisible Germany": a semi-official body sponsored by the "Federal Ministry for all-German Affairs."

† *Stammtisch* is a German institution. It is a reserved table in a Beer or Coffee or Wine Shop, at which friends regularly gather.

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of us Germans has much political judgement; but he believes the Russians." The evening wears on into the small hours. These men have news in advance: "A referendum is to be held in the Soviet Zone in October asking people whether they prefer fifty more years of occupation or an East-West agreement and no arming. . . ." "That is tactics, nothing more. . . ." "Yes, but it appeals to tired people."

Half next week's leading articles are being thrashed out at this table, and not only for Berlin's papers. German journalists like to work this way. Not a bad way.

To East Berlin to hear Chou en-lai

THIS IS my third visit to East Berlin, by car, by underground, on foot. Since the June 17th riots of last year, trams and buses don't cross the demarcation line, though the "reason" for this year-old stoppage is given as a dispute about the employment of women on this type of transport. Cars with inter-zonal numbers cross, but are stopped for a brief examination by the *Volkspolizei* or *Vopo*, the curious, long-haired, flowery East German police who remind me of the type of "People's Guard" in Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste—cruel and dangerous young renegades. There are also "*Kaserniete Vopo*" or Barrack Police, the nucleus of the East German Army. The *Vopo* have tanks which they used on June 17th, 1953. The American Army has also auxiliary German troops, but unarmed.

Every few weeks the *Vopo* enter the Underground in force and ask for papers. On these occasions someone is usually arrested. This fact spreads a certain apprehension in the Underground, and generally keeps German visitors on tenterhooks. On foot, the journey is dreary and eerie. There is a no-mans-land between the sectors. At the Potzdammer Platz, crossing it is exactly as though one were standing in Lower Regent Street, facing an empty bomb-shattered Piccadilly Circus; as though the newspaper stall at the bottom of Regent Street were beyond the pale, used another currency and sold quite different papers, unobtainable in Lower Regent Street. Unter den Linden, that once busiest of roads is empty and dismal, except for a solitary Russian sentry. There is not even a tourist at the site of Hitler and Goebbels' suicide "Bunker."

Today we go first to the Chinese Poster Exhibition near the Charité Hospital, where Dr. Wohlgemüth, who recently accompanied John over, now has a nice new job.

This exhibition has gay little posters, all in praise of reading and writing, the new accomplishments of the 20th century Chinese. Also some ugly posters of the new ideal type of Chinese man and woman, strong in the arm and bullish in the head.

The Werner Seelenbinder Hall where Chou en-lai, on his way back from Geneva, is to speak, holds 30,000 and is full. Notice East German sailors in uniform. Chou en-lai's high pitched intonation of this (to us) guttural language has fanaticism in it. A solemn German translation accompanies every short Chinese sentence, thus: "The Chinese Democratic Republic and the German Democratic Republic were both founded in 1949 and are bound by friendship and democratic understanding" (*prolonged clapping*). "The Chinese Democratic Republic is a peace-loving Republic which has given proof of its friendly and peaceful relations with the peoples of Vietmin, Cambodia, and Laos" (*equally prolonged clapping*), and so on and on, until Chou en-lai begins to describe China's many coming five-year-plans and his present trade conversations with the Grotewohl Government of East Germany. China will order all manner of tools, machinery, glass, cameras, typewriters in East Germany . . . which makes the clapping more vigorous still. East Germany has at last found a friend, for this is the first big power to pay an official visit to East Germany, and is it not the biggest of all?

After Chou en-lai, Grotewohl speaks. He is a kind of German Nenni, just as friendly, just as confusing, just as beholden to his Communist allies. He produces a new line in propaganda which will certainly go the rounds of West Germany and take some people in: "Geneva has proved one can negotiate with the great Communist powers from weakness and not from strength."

The crowd streaming out of the hall "is far better dressed than a year ago," says a member

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of our West Berlin party; "the Russians have derequisitioned twelve clothing factories in East Germany for German consumption since the June revolt, and the result is visible."

A small motor-bus full of Chinese secretaries drives through the crowd, waving and waved at. Chou en-lai has left in a Russian "Sis" car, in a long procession of "Sisses," followed by smaller cars.

In the Stalin Allee the two cafés, the Warsaw and the Budapest with soft music on three floors, are full. Their ceilings are of white stucco with purple and green backgrounds; the carpet is heavy plush in eight violent colours. Mr. Attlee is said to have paid a private visit here two days ago and to have remarked that the Stalin Allee is not a housing scheme but a parade ground.

It is in fact an esplanade, 150 ft. wide, and a mile long, lined on either side with cream-tiled Lyons' Corner Houses, just like the one in Coventry Street in London, only with small windows. The ground floor of all these identical tiled buildings consists of colonnaded shops. It is meant to be impressive and is. Also, it is very political. Bus loads of visitors from Soviet Europe are unloaded to view it every day.

Nothing else in East Berlin has been built or rebuilt. The rest is unpainted, shoddy, slow, and sad. Went to a news picture. Waited twenty minutes for a bus, waited ten minutes for the first film to begin, waited five minutes between each film. Rationing is strict and could support a man for twelve days of the month. The rest is a problem and very expensive. A West Berliner wrote that the Stalin Allee is intended to provide the German worker with the illusion of living in a palace. There were no palaces in East Berlin to capture and occupy, so these giants were built. They provide three-roomed flatlets for Party officials. I keep wondering whether they have lifts, or whether one has to climb the six floors.

The Social Democrat Congress

IN West Berlin the SPD Congress is over. All the purely pacifist resolutions have been defeated. Herr Ollenhauer's final resolution has been adopted; it advocates, in the event of the revival of German armed forces, "a democratic army law and civilian control of the armed forces." There are also resolutions on improving wages which will involve strikes, probably. Have a long talk with a leading Social Democrat who advocates the forming of a German militia with "short service for defence, by all men of military age. No revival of regiments and their Prussian traditions. We dread that peril, which your British and American generals can't see."

The whole Congress was unanimously against the European Defence Community and the European Army, but not on obvious grounds. One trade union leader explained to me: "We don't want to belong to this little Europe. The trade unions in France and Italy are mostly under Communist Control. In France the non-Communist trade unions get little government support. Our unions are all behind the SPD. Our associations in Europe must be with trade unions like our own, in England, Scandinavia, and Benelux. The U.S.A. unions are our friends too. The bigger Europe we envisage, backed by American support, has room for Italy and France; it is the only Europe our members would back."

Came away from several visits to this Congress feeling that the German Social Democrats had nothing Communist about them. Only their Sudeten members are genuinely in favour of a European Army, and so get accused of being "Fascists." Also, of course, they want the Sudetenland back inside Germany. They go and look at it, when very homesick, from a peak in Bavaria, one of them told me. And who would not peep at his own highlands, if he could?

On leaving Berlin

GERMANY'S famous Busch Circus is in East Berlin just now, and some children from West Berlin have been taken to see it. Glyndebourne Opera Company will be in East Berlin early in October as the guests of the Grotewohl Government. West Berliners are talking about it already, and are sad that it is not coming to them.

What a fate for a city of four million, to be

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cut in half like this! I have found friends—old friends of long standing in West Berlin—who bear up wonderfully under the strain and the isolation. None can plan for more than six months ahead, for no one ever knows when the Russians will drop their present concessions and turn on the screw at Helmstedt or in the air corridor. Some eyes are turned to a far future in which Russia and China "fall out"; some are turned inwards only, planning, working for German unity. Someone lends me the current number of *Wiener Hefte* with an article on Berlin in it. The writer, visiting Berlin, is more depressed than I am. He says he found Berliners thinking that "the first incendiary bomb seems like a child's toy today, compared with what came after, and that seems harmless compared with what may yet come. . . . They remember how the houses sprang open, the trees cracked in the burning streets. Then came conquest; the Russian occupation, hunger, lack of water, ice cold winters with broken panes, the great Blockade and air-lift, hunger and cold again. . . . Since then everyone has his own private cares back again, worry for himself and for the future, which itself will never again be a place or a time in which our hopes can thrive."

Hamburg

From Berlin to Hamburg, after two hours in the air, means shaking oneself in order not to be run over, so great is the traffic here, so big and fast-moving the crowds, and so active the port. Today there are nearly two million people here. Half Hamburg's dwellings were bombed when the city only numbered 1,400,000, eleven years ago. New housing is on a vast scale, mostly of the Corbusier "*machine à vivre*" type, 14-floor skyscrapers. Some 60,000 new dwellings have gone up and many more are on the way. The port handles up to 65 per cent of its pre-war tonnages. It handles most of Germany's exports, which have risen from 697 million marks' monthly, in 1950, to 2,096 million marks' monthly in 1954.

Would this not have been a likely capital of Western Germany? The Mayor says Hamburgers do not fancy the idea; they have little interest in anything but the sea and their sea traffic. Yet one of their Christian-Democrat deputies has "gone over" since my return from Germany—Herr Schmidt-Wittmack, with his wife and children. Meanwhile Hamburg has to provide for 300,000 refugees from East Germany, to which he has gone.

Hamburg has its racecourse, with fashionable meetings at which grey top hats are worn, and elegance is the order of the day. In England that world is no longer isolated; in Hamburg one gathers that the well-to-do live very much apart. Politically they support *Die Welt*, a fairly anti-British newspaper. Difficult to find out what else they support; probably (on trade grounds) negotiation with Russia. Extremes meet here, as in Milan and Turin.

Last Sunday, at a meeting of East German exiles in Kiel, the city of Tilsit was "adopted." Tilsit used to be on the outer fringes of Memel. Today it is annexed to Russia. Someone who had been at the meeting said it was not an irredentist meeting, "purely sentimental." Can find no analogy in England for this: but then the Orkneys are not under Finnish occupation.

My last three days are spent in Schleswig Holstein with old friends, and for that glimpse of a lovely countryside I am grateful. Had I been a tourist, the journey would have been mostly in the countryside. Tourism is just beginning again, to the Black Forest, Bavaria, and the Rhine: but that is a different world.

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David Wright

Monologue of a Deaf Man

'*Et lui comprit trop bien, n'ayant pas entendu*'—TRISTAN CORBIÈRE

IT IS a good plan, and began with childhood
As my fortune discovered, only to hear
How much it is necessary to have said.
Oh silence, independent of a stopped ear,
You observe birds, flying, sing with wings instead.

Then do you console yourself? You are consoled
If you are, as all are. So easy a youth
Still unconcerned with the concern of a world
Where, masked and legible, a moment of truth
Manifests what, gagged, a verb should have told,

In observer of vanity and courage
And of these mirror as well; that is something
More than a sound of violin to assuage
What the human being most dies of: boredom
Which makes hedgebirds clamour in their blackthorn cage.

But did the brushless fox die of eloquence?
No, but talked himself, it seems, into a tale.
The injury, dominated, is an asset;
It is there for domination, that is all.
Else what must faith do deserted by mountains?

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Talk to me then, you who have so much to say,
Spectator of the human conversation,
Reader of tongues, examiner of the eye,
And detective of clues in every action ;
What could a voice, if you heard it, signify?

The tone speaks less than a twitch and a grimace.
People make to depart, do not say 'Goodbye.'
Decision, indecision, drawn on every face
As if they spoke. But what do they really say?
You are not spared, either, the banalities.

In whatever condition, whole, blind, dumb,
One-legged or leprous, the human being is,
I affirm the human condition is the same :
The heart half broken in ashes and in lies,
But sustained by the immensity of the divine.

Thus I too must praise out of a quiet ear
The great creation to which I owe I am
My grief and my love. O hear me if I cry
Among the din of birds deaf to their acclaim
Involved like them in the not unhearing air.

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Jessie D. Wall

Inquisition

WHILE we waited for the train to start we looked furtively at each other, or slept according to the energy we had expended during that week of continuous and amazing sunshine. Most faces had not quite congealed still and had curiously impermanent appearances, as though at any moment they might slip into totally different shapes, and this was particularly noticeable in the face of the man sitting opposite to me.

I found myself looking at his face again and again with a kind of horror. Not only was he still oleaginous, but his features had assumed—as perfectly ordinary features sometimes do—something of the grotesque, which, for the moment, was spine-chilling.

His head lolled against the upholstery and his eyes were closed. His lower lip hung open like a wet tyre and his two chins melted into his chest. Against this chest lay a replica of his face, obviously that of his son, a child of about six. The boy was playing, moodily, I thought, with a frond of seaweed, and his expression too was unusual. There was a hint of sadness round his mouth, and the protuberant eyelids downcast upon the seaweed suggested deep thought. The child was not attractive, being too pale and too bulging-out-of-his-blazer, though it was an added misfortune that his school cap was much too big.

"Wonder what Freddy Hall's doing now?" the man suddenly asked, without moving his lips. "*He* didn't go to the seaside, *did* he, Royston? *He* won't know all about the sailing boats and the tides like you, will he?"

"No, Dad," Royston answered meekly.

"Royston," the voice dreamily asked, "if one fish was three ha'pence, how much would five cost?"

Royston swallowed.

"Pardon, Dad?"

His father's features quivered as semi-consciousness was pierced. He heaved himself upright and his chins sank on the crown of the cap. His plump cheeks surged upwards, bagging the skin under his eyes. He looked remarkably like a broody hen. Earnestly and in a high voice he explained how to do the sum, with a reference to Freddy Hall and his quickness at figures.

"In school one day you'll start doin' sums based on this kind, Royston," he observed, "and if you start doin' them with Daddy *now* you'll be ahead of everybody, won't you? Now, repeat after me, 'two fishes threepence . . .' "

Parrot fashion Royston learnt the price of five fishes.

I feared that mathematics was not his strong point, but Daddy expressed pleasure.

"Good boy! Look at Mummy there. Mummy's asleep while we're learning things!"

After a sufficient interval I looked at Mummy who sat at the other end of the compartment. She seemed to be asleep, but I had the impression that one ear was cocked towards Royston.

"We'll look out of the window and tell Mummy what we've seen when she wakes up," Daddy decided. "For instance dear, how many people can you count in that carriage opposite?"

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Obediently Royston began to count people.

"Eight," he said unenthusiastically.

Daddy's eyes half closed.

"If we were to divide them by *half* and then add *two*—how many would you see?"

"Eight?"

Daddy eased himself into the upholstery.

"Just divide them by half *first* then," he suggested.

"Five?" Royston whispered.

"That's rather a foolish answer, dear," Daddy said patiently—in fact one had the impression that his was a limitless, a remorseless patience—"because you know, don't you, that when anything is *broken* in half, like this matchstick, it becomes *reduced* in value?"

As if mesmerised Royston stared at the broken matchstick.

"Two?" he said.

"You're correct on *this*," Daddy conceded, "in a way. Two *halves*, dear, which make one whole. Now, what did I say?"

"Two halves make one whole," Royston echoed, tonelessly.

"Right! Half of two is *one*; half of four is *two* . . ."

I began to understand why Royston looked thoughtful. At any moment Daddy might ask him to double a number or give his height in inches. Kindly, but firmly, Daddy intended him to develop a mathematical mind.

". . . so half of eight must be four," he wound up.

"I don't suppose Freddy Hall's parents train him like we do you, Royston. I want you to remember what I've taught you so that you can be top boy in the class." His eyes closed completely. "What's a half of a *half* then, dear?"

THE engine gave a faint, secretive toot and a convulsive shudder. We were off at last. Mummy "awoke" and peered at her son. Her brows drew together.

"Whatever," she demanded, "have you done to your cap, Royston? You look as bad as Freddy Hall! Come over here and let me put you respectable!"

So far as I could see he had done nothing to that monstrous muffin; there was nothing that *could* be done to a thing like that. He pushed past us and presented himself for a spit and polish and my sympathy deepened. He was hemmed in by knees and large bodies and I felt his lack of space, but when I smiled at him, trying to reveal myself as a friend, he did not respond. He looked heavily at me and heavily away.

"*I* don't know!" Mummy scolded.

Fond hands patted and pulled at him, leaving him exactly as he was before. The cap was pulled smartly from left to right; given, as it were, a reinforcing screw.

"We've learnt ever such a lot Mummy," Daddy called.

"*What* have you learnt, love?" she asked, wiping Royston's hands.

"Tell Mummy," Daddy urged. "Half of eight is . . .?"

He winked at Mummy and she nodded.

Royston remembered half of eight and, with help, half of twelve. He leaned slackly against his mother, his eyes fixed on the seaweed. I hoped that he had found it all by himself, *in* the sea, and had felt the wideness of the sea. As he strove to remember things—this questioning had many branches and by-passes which his parents obviously thought would aid him—his brows jerked alarmingly.

"You *must* remember, Royston," Mummy told him, "or Freddy Hall's going to be sitting above you all through school! His mother's bad enough *now* about young Freddy's marks—'full marks for everything again' she keeps saying—without you developing a lazy mind, dear. What d'you think she said to me last week, Reg? 'What a pity your Royston can't seem to pick *figures* up!' she said. 'Figures are *so* important in life!' "

"Who said he couldn't pick them up?" Daddy demanded, with measureless superiority. "It's just mechanical remembering with Freddy, nothing deeper. He can't *read* a quarter as well as Royston."

"Oh, *reading!*" Mummy blew down her nose. "Top of the class in *that*. He just wants practising on figures, that's all, like we've been doing. Bringing them in natural, wherever we are."

They appeared to be speaking *at* us, as to a

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silent audience, but one supremely interested in Royston's blood-feud with Freddy Hall, and indeed I for one had begun to detest Freddy Hall.

"Freddy give me a marble to take on 'oliday!" Royston suddenly revealed, almost animated at the thought.

"*Did* he!" Mummy exclaimed. "Before reading lesson?"

"I think so. Yes. Before Miss Meadows read about the wood pixie what paints the leaves."

"I thought so! Trying to pick your brain again. You give him his marble back Monday morning, Royston."

"But *Mum* . . .!"

"*Give it him back, Royston.* You've got hundreds of marbles at home, you silly boy. You don't want Freddy Hall's cast-offs."

"Taking that marble just as an example," Daddy remarked, "and adding nine, plus two, how many would you have?"

"Eleven?" Royston hazarded, his eyebrows flying into his hair.

"Don't be *silly*, dear!" cried Mummy. "One, plus nine, is *ten*. Plus *two* is *twelve*."

"Take away three," Daddy said cunningly.

Royston thrust the seaweed into his mouth and uttered something unintelligible. His anxiety communicated itself to me and the total beat in my brain.

"*Nine*," I telepathed to him. "*Nine*, Royston!"

"Six?" he offered and quickly broke into, "Little Ellie sits alone," but was firmly stopped.

DADDY changed places with someone and sat beside Mummy, gazing into Royston's face.

"You'll never pass exams if you can't remember *now*," Mummy moaned—I had a vision of Freddy Hall triumphant in a Grammar School cap—"and we shall be ever so disappointed if you don't. These exams'll come along in no time, Royston, and it's what you take in now that'll help you. You want to go to a good school, don't you? Without Daddy having to sacrifice his pleasures for it? Well then. Let's try again, Daddy. Now *listen*, Royston. Nine plus one . . ."

His face was as taut as a plump face can be. He breathed that he *did* want to go to a good school; that he wanted to beat Freddy Hall; but if I knew Royston's luck, Freddy, whoever he was, would always get to the tape first.

"Minus three!" they urged him.

"Five plus five!"

"*Good* boy!"

They seemed unaware of us now—I believe that they were unaware. This Miracle that they had created absorbed all their attention. They had Great Plans for it. A University perhaps and a profession. They wound themselves round the child like ivy, convinced that out of his brain would come what *they* desired.

The lessons continued all the way home, together with memory tests. What was his address? His county? His nearest big railway station? How many miles had Daddy told him he'd travelled that day? Minus ten? Good boy! Don't be *silly*, Royston.

The seaweed slithered to the floor. Royston plaited his fingers in agony. I could bear no more and interrupted them to give him a toffee. He took it politely but without a smile. Mummy and Daddy addressed me through him.

"Say thank you, Royston. There's a lovely sweet! That was kind, wasn't it dear?"

Sadly he nodded, looking as if all his tears had been shed long since.

At last he was shepherded on to his home platform. He stood outside the carriage window while his parents sorted out "macs" and hold-alls, and then he remembered the seaweed and his face lightened. His mouth framed the word and he plucked at his mother.

I picked the frond up and handed it to him out of the window and as I did so I whispered, "Run!"

His heavy baby eyes lifted, startled, to mine. I think that he began to smile. He might even have run, but Daddy loomed over him.

"Say thank you, my son. Nearly lost it, didn't you?"

As they walked down the path from the Halt Daddy was examining the seaweed and his high voice floated back to me.

"Now, how many *bulbs* can you count on here, Royston?"

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P. G. Wodehouse

Berlin Broadcasts (II)

Third Broadcast

IN the first of these talks on How To Be An Internee In Your Spare Time Without Previous Training, I mentioned that one drawback to starting on a journey from an internee's viewpoint is that when he moves from spot to spot he never knows where he is going. Another is that when he has to do it in company with a large mob of his fellows, he cannot hope for anything resembling travel *de luxe*. We had started from Paris Plage a little band of thirteen. Forty-four of us left Loos Prison. By the time the train finally got under way we numbered about eight hundred, for all through the day vans had been rolling up, bringing fresh additions to the chain gang.

Our destination, we discovered when we got there, was Liège, where we were to be put up in the barracks, and we made the nineteen-hour trip in those "*Quarante Hommes, Huit Chevaux*" things . . . in other words, cattle trucks.

I had sometimes seen these on sidings in times of peace and had wondered what it would be like to be one of the Quarante Hommes. I now found out, and the answer, as I had rather suspected, is that it is not so good. Eight horses, if they had stunted their growth by cigarette smoking as foals, might manage to make themselves fairly comfortable in one of these cross-country loose boxes, but forty men are cramped, especially if they are fifty men, as we were. I suppose a merciful oblivion comes over a sardine before it is wedged into the tin, but if it could feel, I know now just how it would feel.

Every time I stretched my legs during the night, I kicked some poor human waif. This would not have mattered so much, but every time the human waifs stretched their legs, they kicked me. Looking back on the trip, it is a constant mystery to me how we all got through without mishap. The floors of the trucks were full of holes, through which icy draughts whistled up and curled about our legs, and other icy draughts whistled down from the roof and played about our heads, and we were all men in the middle and late fifties. Yet nobody seemed to get pneumonia or even develop lumbago. I suppose there is a special Providence that watches over internees.

ALL through the next morning and well into the afternoon we lurched and heaved through Belgium until, agreeably surprised to find that we really had arrived somewhere, we reached Liège. Conducted by SS men, we tramped for miles up what must be one of the steepest hills in Europe and came at last to the fort on the summit where the barracks are.

There we found an atmosphere of unpreparedness. It was as if one had got to a party too early. Everything was in confusion, particularly the arrangements for feeding us.

These had been entrusted to one of those sketchy thinkers, the sort of man who goes about looking surprised when errors and omissions are pointed out to him, and saying "I never thought of that." A dreamy, absent-minded chap, probably a poet, he had overlooked the fact that internees eat.

He must have had a bad moment when we

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all streamed into the barrack square and lined up, licking our lips. Here, it must suddenly have struck him like a blow, were eight hundred men who were going to live mostly on soup, and while he rather thought he knew where to lay his hands on a little soup, if he hunted around a bit, he had completely forgotten that you have to have something to put the stuff in.

"Golly, yes," he said, when this was drawn to his attention. "I see what you mean. One ought to have bowls or something, oughtn't one? I suppose they couldn't just go to the cauldrons and lap?"

No, we couldn't just go to the cauldrons and lap. For one thing, we would burn our tongues, and for another the quick swallowers would get more than their fair share. It was due to our own resourcefulness that the problem was finally solved. At the back of the barrack yard there was an enormous rubbish heap into which Belgian soldiers through the ages had been dumping old mess tins, cups, with bits chipped off them, bottles, kettles, and containers for motor oil. We dug these out, gave them a wash and brush up, and there we were.

I had the good fortune to secure one of the motor-oil containers. It added to the taste of the soup just that little something which the others hadn't got.

LIÈGE bore the same resemblance to a regular Ilag, like the one we were eventually to settle down in at Tost, which a rough scenario does to a finished novel. There was a sort of rudimentary organisation. We were divided into dormitories, each with a Room Warden, but that was as far as it got.

The first thing we had to cope with on our arrival was the dirt, and that took some doing. There were alluvial deposits everywhere, and, of course, nothing was issued to us which would help us to tidy up. We just had to scrounge around for old pails and rags and brushes, those who had not managed to find any borrowing or stealing from those who had. Armed with these, we tackled the dormitories, then the corridors, and finally the *bonne bouche*—the latrines. And that, believe me, was something.

Materially, Liège was an improvement on Loos. We had beds and could get out into the fresh air, and the food was better. For breakfast we got two ladlefuls of imitation coffee and a slab of black bread. At eleven-thirty we had two ladlefuls of soup, with rice or potatoes in it. Supper at seven was the same as breakfast.

Parades took place at eight in the morning and eight in the evening, and as far as they were concerned I did not object to having to stand for fifty minutes or so, for they provided solid entertainment for the thoughtful mind.

You might think that fifty minutes was rather a long time for eight hundred men to get themselves counted; but you would have understood if you had seen us in action. I don't know why it was, but we could never get the knack of parading. We meant well, but we just didn't seem able to click. It was the same at Huy and in the early days at Tost, though there we never managed to reach quite the same heights of pure delirium. To catch us at our best you would have had to catch us at Liège.

The proceedings would begin with the Sergeant telling us to form fives, whereupon some of us would form fours, some sixes, and others eights. I think our idea was that the great thing was to form something promptly and zealously, without bothering about trivial technicalities. You could see that we were zealous by the way those who had formed sixes, when rebuked, immediately formed fours, while those who had formed fours instantly formed sixes. Nobody could accuse us of not trying to enter into the spirit of the thing.

At long last, we would manage to get into fives, and a very pretty picture we made, too. But was this the end? Far from it. It was not an end but a beginning. What happened was that old Bill in Row 20 would catch sight of old George in Row 42 and disorganise our whole formation by shuffling across to ask him if he had heard the one about the travelling salesman.

Time marches on. Presently Old Bill, having had a good laugh with Old George, decides to shuffle back, only to find that his place has been filled up like a hole by the rising tide. This puzzles him for a moment, but a solution soon

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presents itself. He forms up as the seventh man of a row, just behind Old Perce, who has been over chatting with Old Fred, and has just come back and lined up as number six. The Corporal would then begin to count.

He generally counted us about five times before he saw what was getting his figures wrong. When he did, he cut Bill and Perce out of the flock and chivvied them around for awhile, and after a good deal of shouting, order and symmetry were restored.

But was this the end? Again, no. The Corporal, assisted now by a French interpreter, walks the length of the ranks, counting. Then he walks back, still counting. Then he gets behind us and counts again. ("If I have enough money after this war is over," said Internee Sandy Youl to me on one of these occasions—we were numbers seven and eight of our row of five—"I am going to buy a German soldier and keep him in the garden and count him six times a day.")

Something seems to be wrong. There is a long stage wait. The Corporal and the Interpreter have stepped aside and are talking to the Sergeant. The word goes round that we are one short, and people begin to ask "Where's Old Joe?" It seems that nobody has seen him since breakfast, and we discuss the matter with animation. Can it be that Old Joe has escaped? Perhaps the gaoler's daughter smuggled him in a file in a meat pie?

No, here comes Old Joe, who has been having a quiet smoke at the other end of the yard. He comes strolling along with a cigarette hanging from his lower lip, and eyes us in an indulgent sort of way, as who should say "Hullo, boys, playing soldiers? May I join in?" He is thoroughly cursed, in German by the Sergeant and Corporal, in French by the interpreter, and in English by us, and takes his place in the ranks.

The mathematicians among us now feel pretty hopeful. They figure it out that if we were one short before Old Joe's arrival, now that we are plus Old Joe we should come out exactly right. It looks as if at the most one more count from right to left, one more count from left to right and one more count from behind ought to do the trick.

Picture our chagrin and disappointment, accordingly, when we discover, after all this has happened, that we are now *six* short. That is to say, so far from gaining by Old Joe very decently consenting to join the parade, we have received a most serious set-back.

The Sergeant calls for another conference, a sort of General Meeting this time, for the Room Wardens are invited to attend it, and they all stand to one side with their heads together. We cannot hear what they are saying, but we can see the Sergeant's wide gesticulations, and we know that what he is telling the Board is that this looks like funny business to *him*.

"Don't tell me," he says, "that six internees can just vanish into thin air."

"Seven," says the Corporal with a deferential cough.

The Sergeant dashes back with popping eyes and skims along the ranks.

"You'll think me cuckoo," he says, coming back, "but I believe it's eight."

"Or, rather, nine," says the Corporal, who, too, has not been idle. "May I make a suggestion?"

"Do, Heinrich. One welcomes the fresh mind."

"Let's count 'em," says the Corporal.

So we are counted again and the official score is issued. Eight short is the figure.

"Did you ever see the Indian rope trick?" asked the Corporal, making conversation to bridge over an awkward pause. But the Sergeant is not listening. He is trying to think what to do, what to do. If we are going to melt away at this rate, he is saying to himself, it will not be long before he is down to his last internee. Eventually, he announces that we are to return to our dormitories, where the Room Wardens will check us up.

My dormitory is so anxious to please that it gets a large sheet of cardboard and writes on it in chalk the words:

ZWANZIG MÄNNER, STIMMT

which our linguist assures us means "Twenty men, all present and correct," and when the whistle blows for the renewal of the parade we exhibit this.

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It doesn't get a smile out of Teacher, which is disappointing, for we feel that short of giving him a red apple we couldn't have done much more for him. After a lot more counting, just when the situation seems to be at a deadlock, with no hope of finding a formula, the Interpreter, who has his inspired moments, says, "How about the men in hospital?"

These prove to be eight in number, and we are dismissed. We have spent a pleasant and instructive fifty minutes and learned much about the Human Comedy.

IT must have been a dream about these parades that made me wake the dormitory up in the small hours one night by laughing heartily in my sleep, for there was really nothing much else to laugh at in Liège barracks. It was a dull, depressing life. We had not yet begun to settle down, and the days seemed to stretch out endlessly. Nobody appeared to be taking any interest in us, and the feeling of being Orphans of the Storm began to weigh upon our spirits. We had the impression that the Germans didn't really want us, but couldn't quite bring themselves to throw us away.

Our chief solace was looking forward to meals. But even these were spoiled by the dreary preliminaries. They were served from large cauldrons outside the cookhouse at the far end of the barrack square, and we got them by lining up in a queue, the whole eight hundred of us, which meant the reverse of quick service for those at the tail end of the procession. It generally took about an hour for them to reach the trough, and one wondered what it would be like on a rainy day.

Fortunately, the rainy day never came. The weather was still fine when, a week after our arrival, we were once more put aboard vans and driven to the station, our destination being the Citadel of Huy, about twenty miles away. The journey took us six and a half hours, travelling as before in cattle trucks.

If somebody were to ask me whose quarters I would prefer to take over, those of French convicts or Belgian soldiers, I would find it hard to say. Belgian soldiers, though purer in their moral outlook and not so prone to draw improper pictures on the walls, make lots of work for their successors. It took us days to get Liège barracks spotless. And without wishing to be indelicate, I may say that until you have helped to clean out a Belgian soldiers' latrine, you ain't seen NUTTIN'.

If someone comes to me a few years from now and asks me what I did in the great war, I shall say "I helped to clean out the latrine at Liège barracks." And it is extremely probable that my interlocutor's reply will be: "I thought as much," for even now you can still get an occasional whiff, if the wind is in the right direction.

As the fellow said, You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, but the scent of the roses will cling to it still.

Fourth Broadcast

IF ON the evening of our arrival at Huy I had been told that I was going to spend five weeks there, I should most certainly have said "Death, where is thy sting?"

To begin with, the place had obviously been designed to accommodate at the outside about two hundred inmates, and we were eight hundred. When we were parading in the courtyard, we had filled it from wall to wall. In addition to this, the terrain was far from being what we could have wished. The surface of the courtyard sloped sharply and was jagged with protruding stones, rendering exercise an impossibility. And, finally, Huy appeared to have been expecting us even less than Liège had done. You will remember that our arrival had seemed to come upon Liège as a complete surprise and that nothing had been provided in the way of soup bowls. What Huy was short on was bedding.

Now an internee does not demand much in the way of bedding. Give him a wisp or two of straw and a few lice, and he feels you are pampering him. But at Huy it looked for a while as if there would not even be straw.

After some days the authorities managed to produce enough blankets for twenty men. I was not one of the twenty. I don't know why it is, but I am never one of the twenty who get anything. For the first three weeks at Huy, till my wife sent me another suitcase, all I had over

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me at night was a raincoat, and one of these days I am hoping to meet Admiral Byrd and compare notes with him.

Though I shall probably not let him get a word in edgeways. He will start off with some story about how nippy he found the winter evenings at the South Pole, and I shall chip in with a "Jussa minute, Byrd, jussa minute. Wait while I describe to you my sensations at Huy from August 3rd, 1940, till the day I got my dressing gown. Don't talk to me about the South Pole. It's like someone telling Noah about a drizzle."

THE Citadel of Huy is one of the show places of Belgium. It was actually built, I believe, as late as the Napoleonic wars, but its atmosphere is purely medieval. It is the sort of place which they used to advertise in the Middle Ages as "Would suit robber baron." It looks down on the river Meuse from the summit of a mountain, the kind of mountain Gutzon Borglum would love to carve faces on, and once you're in, you're in.

You enter by a massive gate, outside which sits a sentry dreamily fingering a machine gun. To your right you observe a picturesque latrine, to your left a narrow, stone-flagged path known to us as the Rue de la Paix. The Rue de la Paix is flanked by a high, grassy bank with bushes on it, at the top of which is the courtyard. In order to reach the courtyard from the Rue de la Paix it was necessary to climb twenty-seven stone steps, and when you had done it, what had you got—the courtyard.

A maddening place, this courtyard, for it was hemmed in on three sides by high walls, on whose summit there were broad, grassy walks, where it would have been very pleasant to stroll, but which were barred to us by soldiers with machine guns. One's emotions, as one looked up and saw the sentries sniffing the fresh air and enjoying the view, were what I should imagine steerage passengers on a liner experience when they stare up at the exquisites on the first-class deck. We also felt like minor infusoria at the bottom of a well. "Wodehouse," I remember saying to myself more than once, "Alter your appearance very slightly, and you would be a ringer for a water-beetle."

Inside the building everything was of stone, including the walls which were fourteen feet thick. The corridors were lighted by bays, in which were narrow slits of windows of the type used by medieval bowmen for shooting arrows at visitors. It was through these, if you were an internee with a wife living in Belgium, that you shouted to your wife when she came to find out how you were getting on. She would stand on the slope below, as high up as she could get, and shout at *you*. Neither could see the other, and the whole thing was like something out of *Il Trovatore*.

The only place in the building from which it was possible for somebody inside to get a glimpse of somebody outside, was the window of the room used as an office by the Canteen Committee at the end of the north-west bastion. Here the wall dropped sheer for hundreds of feet down to the road. Men would rush into the canteen room and fling themselves through the window and lie face down on the broad sill, shouting. And from far below would come answering cries. It was startling till one got used to it, and one never quite lost the fear that the fellows would lose their heads and jump, or else over-balance and topple over.

But this lying on the sill was *verboten* later, as were most things at Huy, where our Kommandant's slogan seemed to be "Go and see what the internees are doing and tell them they mustn't." I remember him calling an extra parade to tell us that stealing was forbidden.

THESE extra parades were a great feature of life at Huy, for our Kommandant had a passion for them.

Mind you, I can find excuses for him. If I had been in his place, I would have ordered extra parades myself. His headquarters were down in the town, and there was no road connecting the town with the citadel, just a very steep, winding path; so that when he came to visit us he had to walk. He was a fat, short-legged little man in the middle sixties, and walking up steep, winding paths does something to fat, short-legged men who are not as

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young as they were. Duty called him now and then to march up the hill and to march down again, but nothing was going to make him like it.

I picture him starting out all sweetness and light, toddling along with the milk of human kindness sloshing about inside him and his heart full of love for all created things: and then he hits that path and becomes more and more soured with every twist of it. Half way up the precipice the milk of human kindness has begun to curdle. Two-thirds of the way up, he has begun to wonder what on earth can have given him the idea that he was fond of all created things, because these are just what he most dislikes. And when at last he totters through the gate, with a crick in the back and blisters on both feet, and sees a mob of internees all cool and fragrant, loafing at their ease about a delightful shady courtyard, the sight is too much for him. He reaches for his whistle and blows it for an extra parade.

The calling of extra parades was not confined to the Kommandant. The Sergeants did it, too, when there was an announcement of any kind to be made. At Tost we had a notice board on which camp orders were posted each morning, but this ingenious device had not occurred to anyone at Huy. The only way they could think of there of establishing communication between the internees and the front office was to call a parade.

TAKE it by and large, then, "tough" is the adjective I would use to describe those weeks in Huy. Our spirits were at their lowest ebb. The first novelty of internment had worn off, and we had become acutely alive to the fact that we were in the soup and likely to remain there for a considerable time. Also, tobacco was beginning to run short, and there was a rather noticeable absence of squareness about the meals.

Rations consisted of bread, near-coffee, and a watery soup made from dry vegetables. We got up at six, and at seven the Room Wardens went to the cookhouse (presided over here by one of the internees) and brought back buckets of coffee to their dormitories, where it was shared out, a mugful per man. They then fetched the bread, one loaf to every eight men, which was just half what we had got at Liège. At one o'clock we each had a mugful of soup, and at six in the evening another mugful of coffee.

In order to supplement this meagre fare, we began to experiment with foods, our motto being "Anything goes." One man found a bush at the end of the bank above the Rue de la Paix with berries on it, and ate those—a sound move, as it turned out, for they happened by a fluke not to be poisonous. I myself relied mostly on wooden matches. I used to chew them between the front teeth, champ into a pulp, and swallow. I would not say it was filling, but it helped.

I found, too, that Tennyson's early poems make quite good eating, as do Shakespeare's sonnets, especially if you have some cheese to go with them. And when the canteen opened, we could sometimes get cheese.

Not much of it, of course. The way the canteen worked was that two men were allowed to go to the town with a guard and bring back as much as they could carry in a haversack apiece, the stuff being split eight hundred ways. There were days when one's share panned out at a slab half an inch long, half an inch wide, and very nearly a quarter of an inch thick. Wrap this up in a page of Shakespeare's Sonnets or "When Claribel low lieth," and add some wooden matches, and you had something which, while not perhaps a gala dinner with coloured balloons and squeakers, was at any rate something.

When the tobacco gave out, most of us smoked a straw or tea. Tea smokers were unpopular with the rest of their dormitory owing to the smell caused by their activities: a sort of sweet, sickly smell, which wrapped itself round the atmosphere and clung for hours. Tea smoking also had the disadvantage that on an empty stomach it led to a mild form of fits. One became quite accustomed to seeing men, puffing away, suddenly pitch over sideways. One revived them with first aid and handed them their pipes again.

This general shortage of luxuries and necessities prevented existence at Huy from being one grand, sweet song. However, as someone

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once observed, it is always darkest before the dawn; and as Methuselah said to the reporter who was interviewing him for the local sheet on how it felt to live nine hundred years, "The first five hundred years are hard, but after that it's pie." It was the same with us. The first seven weeks of our internment had been hard, but something which in comparison was pie was waiting just around the corner. On September the eighth, exactly five weeks from the day of our arrival, the whistle blew for an extra parade, and we were informed this time that we were to pack our belongings and proceed once more to an unknown destination.

This proved to be the village of Tost in Upper Silesia; our future home: the local lunatic asylum.

Fifth Broadcast

I BROKE off last week with our eight hundred internees setting out for the village of Tost in Upper Silesia. I don't know how well acquainted my listeners are with central European geography, so I will mention that Upper Silesia is right at the end of Germany, and that Tost is right at the end of Upper Silesia—in fact, another yard or two from where we eventually fetched up, and we should have been in Poland.

We made the journey this time, not in cattle trucks, but in a train divided into small compartments, eight men to the compartment, and it took us three days and three nights, during which we did not stir from our cosy little cubbyhole. On leaving Huy, we had been given half a loaf of bread apiece, and half a sausage, and after we had been thirty-two hours on the train we got another half loaf and some soup. It was at night time that the trip became rather unpleasant. One had the choice between trying to sleep sitting upright, and leaning forward with one's elbows on one's knees, in which case one bumped one's head against that of the man opposite. I had never realised the full meaning of the expression "a hardheaded Yorkshireman" till my frontal bone kept colliding with that of Charlie Webb, who was born and raised in that county.

As a result of this, and not being able to wash for three days, I was not at my most dapper when we arrived at Tost Lunatic Asylum, which had been converted into a camp for our reception. But in spite of looking like something the carrion crow had brought in, I was far from being downhearted. I could see at a glance that this was going to be a great improvement on our previous resting places.

One thing that tended to raise the spirits was the discovery that Scabies had been left behind. This was the affectionate name we had given to one of our fellow-internees at Huy. He was a public menace and had given me many an uneasy moment during the five weeks in which we had been in close contact. His trouble was that he had not only got lice but had contracted a particularly contagious form of skin disease, and in his lexicon there was no such word as "isolation." He was a friendly, gregarious soul who used to slink about like an alley cat, rubbing himself up against people. One time, I found him helping to peel the potatoes. It was a relief to find that he was no longer in our midst.

That was one thing that cheered me up on arrival at Tost. Another was that it looked as if at last we were going to have elbow-room. An Associated Press man, who came down to interview me later, wrote in his piece that Tost Lunatic Asylum was no Blandings Castle. Well, it wasn't, of course, but still it was roomy. If you had had a cat, and had wished to swing it, you could have done so quite easily in our new surroundings.

This Upper Silesian loony-bin consisted of three buildings—one an enormous edifice of red brick, capable of housing about thirteen hundred; the other two smaller, but still quite spacious. We lived and slept in the first-named, and took our meals in one of the others, where the hospital was also situated. The third building, known as the White House, stood at the bottom of the park, beyond the barbed wire, and for the first month or two was used only as a sort of clearing-station for new arrivals. Later, it was thrown open and became the centre of Tost life and thought—being the place where our musicians practised and gave their concerts, where church services were held

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on Sundays, and where—after I had been given a padded cell to myself for working purposes—I eventually wrote a novel.

The park was a genuine park, full of trees, and somebody who measured it found that it was exactly three hundred yards in circumference. After five weeks at Huy it looked like the Yellowstone. A high wall ran along one side of it, but on the other you got a fine view of some picturesque old barbed wire and a farmyard. There was a path running across its centre which, when our sailors had provided a ball by taking a nut and winding string round it, we used in the summer as a cricket pitch.

THE thing about Tost that particularly attracted me, that day of our arrival, was that it was evidently a going concern. Through the barbed wire, as we paraded in front of the White House, we could see human forms strolling about, and their presence meant that we had not got to start building our little nest from the bottom up, as had been the case at Liège and Huy. For the first time, we were in a real camp, and not a makeshift.

This was brought home to us still more clearly by the fact that the reception committee included several English-speaking interpreters. And when, after we had had our baggage examined and had been given a bath, a gentleman presented himself who said that he was the Camp Adjutant, we knew that this was the real thing.

It may be of interest to my listeners to hear how a genuine civil internment camp is run. You start off with a Kommandant, some Captains and Oberleutnants and a couple of hundred soldiers, and you put them in barracks outside the barbed wire. Pay no attention to these, for they do not enter into the internee's life, and you never see anything of them except for the few who come to relieve the sentries. The really important thing is the inner camp—that is to say, the part where, instead of being outside, looking in, you are inside, looking out.

This is presided over by a Lagerführer and four Corporals, one to each floor, who are known as Company Commanders—in our case, Pluto, Rosebud, Ginger, and Donald Duck. Their job is to get you up in the morning, to see that the counting of the internees on parade is completed before the Lagerführer arrives to inspect, and to pop up unexpectedly at intervals and catch you smoking in the corridor during prohibited hours.

Cooperating with these is the little group of Internee Officers—the Camp Captain, the two Camp Adjutants, the Floor Wardens, and the Room Wardens. The Room Wardens ward the rooms, the Floor Wardens ward the floors, the Adjutants bustle about, trying to look busy, and the Camp Captain keeps in touch with the Lagerführer, going to see him in his office every Friday morning with hard-luck stories gleaned from the rabble—that is to say, me and the rest of the boys. If, for instance, the coffee is cold two days in succession, the proletariat tells the Camp Captain, who tells the Lagerführer, who tells the Kommandant.

There is also another inner camp official whom I forgot to mention—the Sonderführer. I suppose the best way to describe him is to say that he is a führer who sonders.

The great advantage of a real internment camp, like Tost, is that the internee is left to himself all through the day. I was speaking last week of the extra parades at Huy. In all my forty-two weeks at Tost, we had only three extra parades. The authorities seemed to take the view that all they wanted to know was that we were all present in the morning and also at night, so we were counted at 7.30 a.m. and again an hour before lights-out. Except for that, we were left to ourselves.

ONE great improvement at Tost, from my viewpoint, was that men of fifty and over were not liable for fatigues—in other words, the dirty work. At Liège and Huy, there had been no age limit. We had all pitched in together, reverend elders and beardless boys alike—cleaning out latrines with one hand and peeling potatoes with the other, so to speak. At Tost, the old dodderers like myself lived the life of Riley. For us, the arduous side of life was limited to making one's bed, brushing the floor under and around it, and washing one's linen. Repairs to clothes and shoes were done in the tailor's and cobbler's shops.

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When there was man's work to be done, like hauling coal or shovelling snow, we just sat and looked on, swapping reminiscences of the Victorian Age, while our juniors snapped into it. I don't know anything that so braces one up on a cold winter's morning, with an Upper Silesian blizzard doing its stuff, as to light one's pipe and look out of the window and watch a gang of younger men shovelling snow. It makes you realise what the man meant who said that Age has its pleasures as well as Youth.

There were certain fatigues which were warmly competed for, like acting as a server or a carrier for meals and working in the cookhouse. For these, you got double rations. But the only reward of the ordinary fatigue, like hauling coal, was the joy of labour. I suppose a really altruistic young man would have been all pepped up by the thought, after he had put in an hour or two hauling coal, that he had been promoting the happiness of the greatest number, but I never heard one of our toilers talk along these lines. It was more usual to hear them say that, next time their turn came along, they were ruddy well going to sprain an ankle and report sick.

One thing that made Tost so great an improvement on our other camps was the presence there of the internees from Holland. A good many of them were language teachers, lecturers, and musicians, and we had a great organiser in Professor Doyle-Davidson of Breda University. This meant that we were no longer restricted for intellectual entertainment to standing about in groups or playing that old Army game known alternatively as "House" and "Ousey-Ousey," where you pay ten pfennigs for a paper with numbers on it and the banker draws numbers out of a hat and the first man to fill up his paper scoops the pool.

Lectures and concerts were arranged, and we also had three revues and a straight comedy —which would have been a bigger success even than it was but for the fact of our leading lady getting confined to her cell for two days right in the middle of the run.

It was also possible for internees to learn French, German, Italian, Spanish, first-aid, and shorthand, and also to get a thorough grounding in French and English literature. In fact, we were not so much internees as a student body. Towards the end of my stay we had our own paper—a bright little sheet called "The Tost Times," published twice a month.

It is a curious experience, being completely shut off from the outer world, as one is in an internment camp. One lives on potatoes and rumours. One of my friends used to keep a notebook, in which he would jot down all the rumours that spread through the corridors, and they made curious reading. To military prisoners, I believe, rumours are known for some reason as "Blue Pigeons." We used to call them bedtime stories. They never turned out true, but a rumour a day kept depression away, so they served their purpose. Certainly, whether owing to bedtime stories or simply the feeling that, if one was in, one was in and it was no use making heavy weather about it, the morale of the men at Tost was wonderful. I never met a more cheerful crowd, and I loved them like brothers.

With this talk, I bring to an end the story of my adventures as British Civilian Prisoner Number 796, and before concluding I should like once more to thank all the kind people in America who wrote me letters while I was in camp. Nobody who has not been in a prison camp can realise what letters, especially letters like those I received, mean to an internee.

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Films

" Them ! "

IF THERE is any previous screen character They make us think of, it is Lon Chaney, Jr. as Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*. They are overgrown and clumsy, with great staring eyes; They are terribly strong, take killing in Their stride; and They are guileless as babes. When in the end we reach the egg-chamber and see the newly hatched princesses vainly beating Their (comparatively) tiny wings while troops with flame-throwers prepare to burn Them up, we are on Their side: it's rather a massacre of the innocents.

Yes, They are rather lovable. And this because they are such morons. There is nothing so endearing about ordinary little ants, for they have a cunning and resourcefulness which their Big Brothers never exhibit. Twice in the course of *Them!* we see shots of common-or-garden ants going about their voracious and all-conquering business, and how much more menacingly sinister they look! But the Ants which are bigger than men never seem to have a hope of survival. Theirs is not a threat to be taken seriously.

Not, at any rate, so long as we can see Them. When They are offstage, They are real spine-chillers, with Their high-pitched stridulations rising above the wailing of the wind in the desert of New Mexico or reverberating through the sewers of Los Angeles. Even after we have caught our first, long-awaited—but perhaps not long-enough-awaited—glimpse of Them, seen one of Them rather impotently threaten a pretty girl and get shot down in the attempt, and—in spite of the blood-curdling bellow with which it dies—have been distinctly disappointed by our sight of it, even after this anti-climax, the renewed sound of that oscillating whistle coming across the desert has us shivering in our seats again. In fact, we are pretty scared during a high proportion of the film's running-time. Only not, on the whole, when They are actually there.

OUR first intimation of Their existence is the discovery by members of the New Mexican State Police of a little girl walking through the desert in a state of shock and, farther along the road, of a trailer, its walls broken down, all its inhabitants apart from the child having disappeared, leaving traces of blood. Two of the police go on to a store in the middle of the desert. This too has been rampaged, and the proprietor is found dead, his skull broken, his chest crushed, and—as the autopsy later reveals—with "enough formic acid in him to kill twenty men." Sergeant Ben Peterson leaves his colleague Ed behind. The persistent oscillating whistle which has already been heard near the trailer begins again. Ed investigates, disappears from view, fires, and we hear his dying scream.

The FBI is called in. The plaster-cast of a strange footprint found near the trailer is sent to Washington. Two myrmecologists arrive—Dr. Medford and his daughter Patricia. They have their theory as to what has happened, and the first appearance of one of the killers confirms it. Lingering radiation from the first atomic bomb has caused a genetic mutation resulting in a race of giant ants.

The nest is traced, and cyanide gas used to kill the colony. But two of the queens with Their attendant males have got away on Their wedding-flight. Unless these can be traced to Their new nest before further queens breed, the human race is in danger of extermination. Headquarters are established in Washington.

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A report comes in that a Texan whose plane has crashed claims that it happened because he was trying to avoid flying saucers shaped like ants: he is interviewed at the psychopathic ward where he is being held: he's seen Them all right. Another report comes in. A nest has hatched aboard a ship at sea, and killed all the crew. The ship has to be sunk by naval gunfire. News arrives of a large sugar theft in Los Angeles, followed by the discovery there of the mutilated body of a man who had been out in his car with his two boys who have disappeared. The nest is traced to the sewers of Los Angeles.

Troops move in, the town is put under martial law, the nation, hitherto kept in the dark(!), is warned. Military and scientists invade the network of drains under the city. The lost children are found there, alive. Peterson rescues them, but is killed by an Ant. The battle is on, Ants against flame-throwers. The Ants are wiped out, the egg-chamber reached. None of the princesses has got away, and when these go up in flames it is all over. But the film ends thus:

Graham: Pat, if these monsters got started as the result of the first atomic bomb in 1945, what about all the others that have been exploded since then?

Patricia: I don't know.

Medford: Nobody knows, Robert. When man entered the atomic age, he opened a door into a new world. What we'll eventually find in that new world nobody can predict.

IT IS a plot that gets by. Its ingenuities make up for its inconsistencies and implausibilities. Like those in Jacobean tragedies, the horrors are not meant to convince, but to be plausible pretexts for the human situations they give rise to. More accurately, rather than the gruesome spectacles it is the human situations, plus the noises offstage, which provoke horror. The Ants themselves, as we observed earlier, are not very terrifying, except when They are heard and not seen. What terrifies, by convincing us that They are far worse than They look, is the sense of urgent danger conveyed by the actions and dialogue of the human characters, especially when Ed is seen going to his unseen death and in the superbly sudden and inconsequential reference to Them made by a dotty patient in an alcoholic ward—one of several background characters sketched-in with consummate skill. The dialogue, moreover, owes much of its disquieting effect to the fact that it is exceedingly restrained, except at one beautifully timed and realised moment—far transcending the rest of the film in stature—when the little girl is jolted out of shock by a whiff of formic acid and runs across the room—and it is at once the first time she speaks and the first time the pronoun is pronounced—shrieking "Them! Them! Them! Them! Them! Them!"

It is, in fact, the sight of human beings living under the stress of fear that disturbs us, much more than the cause of their fears. For the point of their fear is not their tangible enemy, but their confrontation with the unknown. Again and again they are shown in settings which, of themselves and quite apart from the Ants, suggest unknown dangers: the desert; the deserted store, the electric light swinging crazily in a high wind; the steep tunnels of the nest in the desert; the dried-up river-bed with its steep concrete banks; the dark and interminable drains under the city. There is one moment at which this confrontation with the unknown attains a disquieting universality: when, simultaneously with the announcement by radio of the imposition of martial law, people on pavements and in cafés anxiously observe troops driving silently into the city. It is a moment of many implications, many echoes.

"IT DOES not take long, in watching this horror to end all horrors," runs an editorial comment on *Them!* in the September issue of *The Twentieth Century*, "to realise that, like other recent Hollywood offerings, it carries a Message. The Message is: trust the FBI and watch out for deadly monsters who infest America. The Ants in fact are Reds. We are told by the professor that they are highly organised, adept at social co-operation, warlike and destructive, and quite capable of battling mankind for control of the earth. . . . At any moment one expects to hear the professor launch into a peroration about our threatened liberties. . . . Films such as these are meant to frighten, and it is possible that in America they achieve this purpose, though elsewhere they will be treated as mere curiosities. The danger is that they may help to create a state of mind

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in which political problems are viewed exclusively in crime-detection terms, with the flame-thrower as the only suitable argument. If monsters are lurking in the sewers of our big cities, ready to murder us in our beds, obviously we had best throw restraint to the winds and call in the Army. *Them!*. . . almost justifies the assertion that our civilisation shows signs of decadence."

One would have supposed that, if there are monsters "lurking in the sewers of our big cities," the Army is better equipped to deal with them than either the new or the old diplomacy. And to believe this is hardly to believe that the flame-thrower is a political panacea. Films such as these are indeed "meant to frighten," like a great many other examples of popular entertainment through the ages, and the observed reactions of two audiences in this country—one in the West End, the other at a seaside resort—suggests that they succeed in doing so not in America alone. It is unlikely that any normal member of those audiences expected to hear the professor discuss "our threatened liberties": he was much too preoccupied with the threat to our continued existence. And Red Ants or no, the last thing the film tells us is to "trust the FBI." Only one Federal Agent appears in the film, and his role in the struggle is a minor one. In fact, one of the significant things about *Them!* is that it tends to suggest that the FBI, the Service Chiefs, and the Administration are all incompetent to deal with a situation like this: they are all made to look rather silly, and in fact get teased by the one person who makes all the tactical and strategic decisions—the old scientist, played by Edmund Gwenn, a real fuddy-duddy father-figure from the Old World. Clearly the Message is anything but "trust the FBI."

Still, *Them!* has a Message all right, and it is there in its closing words. It is this: that the age of liberal belief in science as a purely beneficent force is past, because science is not as omniscient as people used to assume it would become, and because science itself has fathered new threats to civilisation and progress. When the two policemen enter the battered store in whose cellar the storekeeper is lying dead, the radio has been left on, and a commentator is heard cheerfully recounting "new strides in the field of medicine" which have been reported to a scientific congress. The irony is not accidental. And the whole film makes it clear that the new threats stirred up by science cannot be answered by science alone, or by flame-throwers alone, but only by the personal courage of the world's Sergeant Petersons, gentle, amiable, Spencer Tracy-ish characters who are ready to give up their lives for that of a child or because of their sense of guilt at having left a friend to meet his death.

This not uncivilised Message is embodied in a mythology which in some respects charmingly recalls *Der Ring des Niebelungen*. The Ants have something in common with the ponderous, malignant, yet vulnerable gods of Valhalla. Their struggle with man arises out of a disturbance in the harmony of nature akin to Alberich's theft of the gold. The destruction by fire of the entire race in their very fortress is not without a precedent in *Götterdämmerung*.

David Sylvester

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Letter from Paris

The Resurgence of French Nationalism

EDC died quickly; and, as I write this, in the afterglow of the Nine-Power Conference, even its shade has vanished. There is nothing surprising in this: history is merciless to the defeated. Nevertheless, its death is worth a lingering thought, for it was an event of some significance in French political life.

It has been a curious affair, this campaign against Western European union by a whole segment of the older nationalism of France—professional soldiers hostile by tradition, training, and *esprit de corps* to the disappearance of a sovereign French army; businessmen who fear to lose potential markets in the East or who are unwilling to face their European competitors without the protection of national frontiers; patriots clinging to the memory of a time when France dealt on an equal footing with the greatest powers of the world; old men anguished by the image of a new world in which their habits would be swept away and their values subjected to revision; ex-*résistants* for whom the meaning of existence was fixed, once and for all, in the exalted moment of struggle against the German occupation, and who have the feeling that a Franco-German reconciliation would transform them into survivors of a bygone era. Certain elements of the Right even allowed themselves to be completely victimised by the confusion, cleverly established by the Communists and their sympathisers, between the two ideas of German rearmament and the European Community. For many of them, "German rearmament" and "European Community" were synonymous. And so they were led to oppose EDC, which was conceived precisely in order to safeguard France against the extreme risks of German rearmament pure and simple. The grim experiences of the past, the memories of the successive invasions of 1870, 1914, and 1939, were invoked in support of precisely that system of international relations which brought all these disasters down on us.

THE fact is that the opposition of many French conservatives to the EDC was not rational but emotional. It is true that this repugnance was not without excuse. For France to have entered a federal Europe would have been, for a nation which has known centuries of sovereign grandeur and which still lives in the nostalgic dream of that grandeur, a sort of abdication which could not take place without pain. It may have been a beginning, but it was also an end—and there is no end without regrets. Even the partisans of EDC could not accept the loss of national sovereignty without a certain sadness. All the more reason for those who did not grasp this historic necessity—and the conservative is by definition the man whom historic necessity evades—to bridle at.

Perhaps some of these men might have resigned themselves to EDC if this abdication had been agreed to at the same time by all the other nations. But why should France give up her sovereignty in a world where other nations retain theirs? Let us leave out of account the formidable U.S.S.R., the gigantic United States. They are empires, continents—and yet one could not think without bitterness that in fifty years France would, perhaps, be only a province of "Little Europe" while Brazil or China, which yesterday were not even reckoned in the concert of nations, will retain their right to that "independence" which we would have lost. But Great Britain—which is as small as we are, as "European" by its position, which no longer amounts to very much,

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and is as menaced as we are, or almost? Why did not Great Britain think it good for her, this "defence community" she thought good for us?

It is incontestable that by refusing to enter the EDC on the same terms as France and Germany, England gave the opponents of the European community their two strongest arguments: (1) Great Britain unbalanced the European edifice by refusing to help provide the necessary counterweight to Germany; (2) —and this second argument has an emotional force infinitely greater than the first—Great Britain was going to keep the sovereignty that France was going to lose; it would remain distinct while we were melted into something else; it would remain a nation while we became an administrative district; it was going to take its final revenge for the Hundred Years War. Whence, bitterness and resentment.

The EDC aroused in certain French souls an echo of Agincourt and Waterloo. Nationalism requires adversaries, not necessarily in order to fight them, but in order to define itself against them; and for French nationalism the anti-English tradition is older than the anti-German one. It was endemic until the Entente Cordiale, and persisted through the Entente Cordiale itself, especially in the overseas territories; it still exists, though in a more subdued form. The Englishman—the English tourist—is not greeted in France with unmixed sympathy. He represents a richer nation, a stronger nation, a nation more sheltered from the accidents of history.

During the last war it was easy to see, after the armistice of 1940 and Mers-el-Kebir, that the old anti-English sentiment was only too ready to be born again in certain conservative French circles. This sentiment was widely exploited, not without partial success, in favour of collaboration with Germany. The anti-English and anti-German sentiments were at that time in opposition, and divided the French conservatives. More recently, the propaganda against the European community united, in the name of nationalism, both anti-English and anti-German feeling.

In the measure that it was desired by England, the EDC was represented to us as the product of a dark plot into which Great Britain entered in order to liquidate French sovereignty for the benefit of a henceforth preponderant Germany; and the fact that Great Britain herself shrank from entering the EDC was invoked to convince us that our island neighbours were well aware of the risks and drawbacks of the course in which they were involving us; England, it was felt, after having exploited the divisions of the continent, now wished to exploit its union.

England would not be in it. Germany would be. These were two great arguments against the European union which told most heavily with certain French conservatives.

From the viewpoint I am discussing, the French "abdication" in favour of Europe was desired, not only by British egoism and the German will to renascence and revenge, but by "American imperialism," bent on subduing Europe to its economic or military ambitions. The anti-European tendencies of French nationalism were outraged by the "pressure" exerted by an America which was suspected of wishing to abase France for Germany's benefit. The EDC was displeasing because it is of American origin, like Coca-Cola. It matters little that the EDC was in fact not of American but of French origin, that it was precisely a French plan conceived in order to avoid the disadvantages of a simple re-establishment of German national sovereignty such as was proposed by the United States. The EDC had been accepted by the United States, therefore it was American. It had been naturalised. The national pride of the French, based on ten centuries of a glorious history, has been transformed by its recent trials into a persecution mania.

In the case of the United States, as in that of Germany, the French sense of inferiority compensates and reassures itself by a feeling of superiority. The United States has attained an enormous degree of power. The evolution of the modern world has favoured it infinitely more than it has us. It is richer than we are. It is stronger than we are. In the eyes of America we are a backward people, a little nation; we are thought of as gesticulating chatterers, Mediterraneans, Don Juans of operetta. The idea they have of us humiliates us. They have an automobile for every three inhabitants, and a large automobile, mountains of television sets and refrigerators. Well, that's not hard to do. Their country is so large. They have only to bend over to gather up the wheat, the iron, and the oil. Besides, they win military victories

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without having to fight, thanks to the superiority of their equipment. Their religious sects and their exhibitions of bare-thighed girls at the head of their political parades are ridiculous. They have no past. We can look down on their sky-scrapers from the heights of our cathedrals. (We forget that, since the United States came into being, we have built neither skyscrapers nor cathedrals, and that the Americans, who are the grandchildren of Englishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, and Italians, are just as authentically descended as we are from the men who built the cathedrals of Pisa and Florence, Amiens and Chartres, Westminster, and Canterbury.) Even if it is admitted that in the present state of the world the vital interests of the United States, in the face of Communist expansion, coincide with French interests, many of those among us in whom the nationalist nerve is still sensitive recoil from a solidarity in which we seem destined, by our very material inferiority, to a subordinate position, a quasi-colonial status.

THUS, the French conservative—or the Frenchman insofar as he is conservative—who refuses to make the effort necessary to understand the modern world and the choices open to France, willingly shuts himself up in a closed attitude, a sulking "isolationism." The modern world puts him in the wrong. Therefore he will refuse to deal with it.

The national pride of the French suffered many blows in the first half of this century, some of them cruel. The defeat of 1940 was only the most brutal. There was the decline of French influence in the world, of the French language and French culture, and the supremacy acquired by foreign countries in most of the domains of industrial technology and scientific research. Only a few years ago the young middle-class Frenchman was brought up in the certainty that he belonged to the most intelligent people on earth—but we have committed many stupidities; that we were the most progressive (since 1789)—but now we are treated practically everywhere as laggards; that we had the finest army in the world—but 1940 came; that we had the finest agriculture—but in Central Europe and Scandinavia the farmers draw richer yields from poorer soil.

But nationalist pride does not surrender so easily. We have fallen back on the few superiorities that remain to us, and we try our best to make our inferiorities themselves look like superiorities. We oppose to other nations, not without justice, our artistic fecundity, the beauty of our monuments, the elegance of our women, the quality of our cuisine, our *soi-disant* amorous superiority, our taste (but we ravage our cities, and our suburbs are the ugliest that modern civilisation has produced), and finally, an "art of living" for which, setting alcoholism aside, many nations envy us indeed.

In fact, even if our country is no longer the richest, nor the most powerful, nor the best organised, nor the wisest, nor even the most respectful of its past, it remains ours, which is the greatest and most decisive reason for loving it. But what remains which is inestimable in our own eyes and in the eyes of the world itself, is in danger, in mortal danger, and we shall not save it by protecting ourselves from the world around us by a haughty isolationism. No providence especially devoted to the salvation of France will watch over us in the coming century, will safeguard against the revolutions of our epoch an anachronistic microcosm of Malthusian industrialists, petty tradesmen, pensioners, *belotte* players, and Sunday anglers. Even if it were a legitimate ambition for us to become a sort of living museum, whose inhabitants would devote the best part of their activities to selling trinkets to the tourists of more enterprising nations, history does not leave us the possibility of this choice. Nothing can change the fact that in the present balance of forces in the world, a sovereign France can only be a myth of the past-fixated mind, while a European community offered a real possibility of the future. But it was precisely fear of the future which was the basis of conservative resistance to the European community.

Thierry Maulnier

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Art

The Arts in Ceylon

WITHIN a few hours of arriving in Ceylon (where I had gone to make some documentary films for the Government), a young lady of the Press asked what on earth had induced me to come to this "cultural desert": and that was a phrase I was to hear repeated many times, in accents deprecatory, sad, or embittered, during my two years in the island. It was a cry from the heart of the younger generation of Ceylonese artists and students, who felt themselves frustrated by the narrow confines of their island home, and yearned for the wider horizons of the art worlds of London and Paris.

And one could not help but sympathise with their plaint, even if it was not altogether true—any more than was another popular fallacy, that it was the British who had destroyed the culture of Ceylon. This seemed to me so manifestly absurd that I could hardly believe it was meant to be taken seriously. The British, I felt sure, had been much too busy with their trading affairs to bother about the arts, let alone destroy them. In fact, it was largely due to the research and writings of British civil servants in the 19th century that a new interest had been aroused in the history and ancient cultures of Ceylon, and work begun on the restoration of the island's buried cities. On the other hand, it was probably true to say that the successive waves of European conquerors, by destroying the power and wealth of the old Sinhalese aristocracy, had at the same time destroyed their traditional patronage of the country's artist-craftsmen.

A third misapprehension, and the opposite of the "cultural desert" one, was that Ceylonese culture was equal to, or better than, that of any other Eastern country. This theory was usually put forward by politicians, or over-zealous nationalists: and I think that one of the most difficult problems for the contemporary artist in Ceylon is how to keep his sense of balance amid all these conflicting prejudices. He is in constant danger of being either over-praised or under-appreciated, and what is urgently needed is an informed, impersonal, and objective standard of artistic criticism.

THE people and scenery of Ceylon are both beautiful and charming: but Colombo, the capital, is essentially a provincial city, and its taste in artistic matters tends to be safe, conventional, and bourgeois. This is not a good environment for the creative artist; especially in a small country like Ceylon, where he cannot escape into the liberating atmosphere of a cosmopolitan café society. In this sort of parochial community, the second-rate is apt to be over-praised, and the original artist to be under-appreciated. This too often leads to a facile and complacent amateurism: for if one's work is good enough to draw the plaudits of local audiences, then why bother to do it better? This "why bother" attitude is one of the most insidious pitfalls for the Ceylon artist—understandable as it may be in that hot and enervating climate, where every smallest effort soaks one in a bath of perspiration. Yet I am convinced that, if real progress is to be made, the artists of Ceylon, in whatever medium, must apply themselves with extra effort and determination to perfecting the techniques of their trades. With a few notable exceptions, there is a too easy tendency to regard art as Inspiration—instead of as a job to be mastered by hard work and application.

But, as well as this danger (of the artist being lulled into a false complacency by too much local adulation), there exists another, and exactly opposite menace, which comes from a small clique in Colombo, whose mouthpiece is a powerful local newspaper, and who,

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professing to take as their yardstick the best in contemporary art from whatever source, never cease to pour scorn and ridicule on the efforts of their own countrymen. This is an equally destructive and regrettable attitude and has resulted, to my knowledge, in a number of painters and musicians giving up in despair, or withdrawing into a self-imposed monastic seclusion.

If I have dwelt rather at length upon the pitfalls and weaknesses of the artist's position in Ceylon, it is not because I am unaware of the excellent work being done by a number of individuals, but because I feel that, for a true appraisal, it is important to give some idea of the background and atmosphere in which he has to work. The creative artist in a small island community like this has many more prejudices to overcome, and a much more solitary path to pursue, than his counterpart in the larger nations and cities of the world.

THE art of easel-painting is comparatively new to the East (hardly more than two generations old), and so its exponents are still searching for a style of their own. Indeed, it is this problem of whether to follow the idioms of the East or the West that is one of the most difficult for the Ceylon artist to decide. The solution will probably eventually be found in a new synthesis of the two. Meanwhile, there exists in Ceylon today an extremely interesting group of young painters who call themselves the "43 Group," and in whom is centred all that is most vital and significant in the plastic arts of the island—perhaps of the whole Eastern world. This society, as its name implies, was founded in 1943, largely through the efforts of the late Lionel Wendt, and no account of the contemporary art-scene in Ceylon would be complete without acknowledging the important contribution which he made to it. Wendt was a well-to-do and enlightened amateur of the arts, and himself a skilled photographer and musician; and it was his energy and enthusiasm, more than anyone else's, which inspired the recent revival of interest in the arts in Ceylon, as well as a greater appreciation of what is best in contemporary European painting, writing, and music. To commemorate his name, the Lionel Wendt Memorial Hall has lately been built, to provide a theatre and art-centre for Colombo.

The doyen of contemporary Ceylonese painters is undoubtedly George Keyt, whose work was recently seen in London in a one-man exhibition at the I.C.A. Keyt has never visited Europe, but his paintings, though basically oriental in style and feeling, show that he is not unfamiliar with the work of Picasso and Braque. His earlier canvases include landscapes, still-life, and figure subjects executed with an unaffected strength and simplicity of design that is sometimes lacking in his later work, and I think it a pity that more of these were not included in his London exhibition. In recent years, and especially after a protracted visit to India which profoundly affected his outlook, he has developed a more calligraphic manner and a marked preference for themes taken from the traditional stories of Indian mythology. In my opinion, George Keyt is an artist of considerable stature, whose work stands comparison with that of such painters as Fernand Leger or Graham Sutherland. He has, I think, more than any other painter, arrived at a satisfactory synthesis of Eastern and Western idioms; or, rather, he has taken what has suited him from the West, and embodied it with the traditional art-forms of the East, to evolve a pictorial expression entirely his own.

Another notable Ceylonese painter, whose work was well received when shown in London earlier this year, is Justin Pieris Daraniyagala. He is a son of Sir Paul Pieris, distinguished Ceylon scholar and historian, who was himself a friend of Augustus John, and was painted by him in the 1920's. Justin studied painting at the Slade School, and in Paris. His style is violent and expressionistic: the pigment laid on thickly in a heavy, nervous impasto. The result is a powerful, and extremely personal, pictorial imagery combined with a lyrical colour sense. He is an original and talented artist, whose work compares favourably with that of any European artist of the same school. Daraniyagala works in a studio hidden among the coconut trees on his father's country estate, and hardly ever exhibits his pictures publicly in Ceylon.

Other painters in the "43 Group" are Harry Pieris, Ceylon's leading portraitist and secretary of the group since its inception; Ivan Peries, a young artist of many styles still searching for his own idiom; R. D. Gabriel, whose pictures, largely based on religious themes, show a

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strong affinity with peasant art; and Ranjit Fernando, the most abstract painter of the group, at present living and studying in London. The "43 Group" receives no official support, and very little patronage, from the people of Ceylon. Nevertheless, in the face of many difficulties, and hardly any encouragement, it has managed to survive and to attract the attention of the art-worlds of London and Paris.

CEYLON has no indigenous music except the drum, and I was told this is because the Sinhalese form of Hinayana Buddhism disapproves of music as being a form of sensual pleasure and indulgence. But there are a number of pleasant and tuneful Sinhalese folk songs, originating from the fishing, farming, and other country communities, which have recently been collected and scored by Devar Surya Sena and others. Otherwise, all the music to be heard in the island is of Indian or European origin. Concerts are well attended; but, generally speaking, the standard of performance is not very high—chiefly, one suspects, because of insufficient rehearsals and attention to technical finish. But there is one young boy, Rohan de Saram, who may quite likely develop into a 'cellist of world repute. Encouraged by Pablo Casals (before whom he played at the latter's house in the Pyrenees), he is now, at the age of fifteen, studying in Italy under the Spanish master, Cassado.

Colombo boasts a surprisingly large number of dramatic societies, giving a wide variety of Western plays and musicals, both classical and modern. But they are all amateur and should be judged as such. One could not help feeling that it would be better if there were fewer societies giving fewer plays, but doing them more thoroughly. The best and most consistent performances were those given by the University Dramatic Society, under the leadership of Professor Ludowyk, who from time to time invites visiting producers to Ceylon to direct their productions. And there was, until recently, a professional company which gave Indian and Sinhalese plays. These were mostly historical dramas, based on stories of the Buddha's life, and written during the latter part of the last century by two Sinhalese dramatists. I was told that they were very popular in their day, but were put out of business by the advent of the cinema.

The outstanding dance-form of Ceylon is the Kandyan dance. It derived originally from south Indian dancing, but in its present form is uniquely Ceylonese and cannot be seen elsewhere. According to the evidence of early temple frescoes, it was formerly danced by both men and women, but today it is only done by men. It is an extremely vigorous dance, performed to the accompaniment of drums and singing, with much energetic stamping and leaping, and sharp, stylised movements of eyes, head and hands. The dancers wear decorative head-dresses and breastplates of silver and coloured beads, with heavy silver anklets, which clash and clatter as they move. The performance lasts for several hours, and works up into a spirited crescendo of frenzied drumming, pirouetting bodies, and flashing feet.

Formerly, the dance-troupes were attached to the Court and much used on ceremonial occasions. They are still to be seen at their most impressive in the annual Kandy Perehera, when, in procession with a hundred richly caparisoned elephants, the sacred Tooth Relic is paraded round the streets of the town. In its most usual form the Kandyan dance is performed by a group of ten or twelve men, but there are also some extremely interesting solo dances, called "Vannams," which imitate the movements of animals and birds.

TAKING it all in all, there are, I think, in Ceylon today, encouraging signs of a new and lively interest in the arts, and of a genuine movement towards a cultural renaissance. What most seems to be needed is firstly, a wider exchange and familiarity with the cultures of other countries; secondly, a more informed and impersonal standard of local criticism; and, thirdly, a more generous and sympathetic patronage of Ceylon artists by the people of Ceylon.

Ralph Keene

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Communications

INDIAN WRITING TODAY

SIR—We write this to congratulate you and Mrs. S. Rajee on her "Notes on the Indian Writer Today" appearing in the July issue of ENCOUNTER. It is quite true that until recently the Indian writers of English considered themselves, and expected outsiders to consider them, the only Indian writers worth the name. Times are changing, no doubt, and the writers in the various Indian languages are being noticed by foreigners visiting this country and are gradually receiving the recognition due to them.

But there is another danger and that is, that, since Hindi has been declared the national language of India, writing in Hindi is likely to be taken for Indian writing. This would be far from the truth. For, as Mrs. Rajee points out, "the other languages of India have a far deeper and often more satisfactory literary tradition."

It is true that the literatures of the various Indian languages have been largely strangers to one another, though some of the popular and important works of one language have been translated into the others. Today the position has changed—at least it is about to change. It is not a fact, as Mrs. Rajee says, that "there is as yet no machinery, State sponsored or private, by which literary material can be exchanged between the languages of India." The Government of India have founded an academy for literature called the "Sahitya Akadomi." One of the objects of this body is to have important books in each of the fourteen major Indian languages translated into the other thirteen, and it has already started working.

Beginning as an ardent social reformer and passing through other propagandist phases, the Indian writer today is becoming truly Indian. As Mrs. Rajee says, "he is attacking more fundamental and basic problems, problems of a human and spiritual nature." If this is so, and she herself says it, it is difficult to agree with her when she says that "Indian writing does not measure completely true by Western standards."

Literatures in almost all Indian languages have been revitalised during the last decade or so and are showing signs of more vigorous and more genuine writing. We are not competent to speak for other Indian languages, but so far as writing in Marathi is concerned we can say that some of the writing being done today will certainly measure true by any standard. We believe this must be true of some other Indian languages as well. . . .

Yours truly,
R. B. JOSHI
W. L. KULKARNI
G. B. GRAMOPADHYE

Bombay, India

IN DISPRAISE OF JANE AUSTEN

SIR—Mr. Trilling in his interesting essay, "In Mansfield Park," discusses the different writers who have been repelled by Jane Austen, and seems to imply that their dislike had a personal and, as it were, defensive basis. This suggests that he is blind to Jane Austen's very real limitations, which do, however, present a serious obstacle for some readers.

Jane Austen is a great moralist and it lies in her art to expose the devious ways of the ego, the strategies of self-love, and the complicated insincerities that are generated by the effort to impress others. But she lacks *experience*, the experience that Blake describes as not to be bought for a song in the market-place, the experience that discloses both in the world and the individual something that transcends the self-protective ego. And this is the reason why Emerson, who was concerned with God, Charlotte Brontë, who like her sister Emily knew the power of the supernatural and the non-human, and even Mark Twain, with his richly painful experience of the rough-and-tumble of living, all agreed in finding Jane Austen's world somewhat small and insignificant. . . .

SYDNEY MENDEL

London, W.4

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Theodore Roethke

The Visitant

I

A CLOUD moved close. The bulk of the wind shifted.
A tree swayed over water.
A voice said:
Stay. Stay by the slip-ooze. Stay.

Dearest tree, I said, may I rest here?
A ripple made a soft reply.
I waited, alert as a dog.
The leech clinging to a stone waited;
And the crab, the quiet breather.

II

Slow, slow as a fish she came,
Slow as a fish coming forward,
Swaying in a long wave;
Her skirts not touching a leaf,
Her white arms reaching towards me.

She came without sound,
Without brushing the wet stones;
In the soft dark of early evening,
She came,
The wind in her hair,
The moon beginning.

III

I woke in the first of morning.
Staring at a tree, I felt the pulse of a stone.

Where's she now, I kept saying.
Where's she now, the mountain's downy girl?

But the bright day had no answer.
A wind stirred in a web of appleworms;
The tree, the close willow, swayed.

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BOOKS

A World Imaginary, but Real

I SUPPOSE readers exist who do not enjoy Heroic Quests, but I have never met them. For many of us they are so much the most delicious form of literature that we can devour one even when our critical faculties tell us it is trash. Those who remember *The Hobbit* as the best children's story written in the last fifty years will open any new work by Professor Tolkien with high hopes, but *The Fellowship of the Ring** is better than their wildest dreams could have foreseen; if he is not a rich man by next Christmas, I shall be surprised.

In discussing a book of this type, a reviewer is at a disadvantage because he must not spoil the reader's pleasure by giving away what happens, which—in this case—is at least as exciting as the story of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. In the normal Quest plot there is a numinous object which has either fallen into the hands of the Enemy or is protected from the unworthy by terrifying guardians; none but the predestined hero can find it, but it is good that he should. In *The Fellowship of the Ring* the numinous object, which is like the Ring of the Niebelungs only even more sinister, is in the possession of the hero at the start. The Enemy who made the evil thing but believed that it had been lost for ever has just discovered its whereabouts and is devoting all his demonic powers towards its recovery. Since even the good cannot use the Ring without becoming evil, it must be destroyed but this can only be done in one way and in one place which, unfortunately, lies in the centre of the Enemy's kingdom; the aim of the Quest, therefore, is to get the Ring to the place of its unmaking, without getting caught.

This quest takes place in an imaginary world of Mr. Tolkien's invention with its own landscape, history, and inhabitants. In its general characteristics this world is Celtic and Scandinavian rather than Mediterranean. The hero, Mr. Frodo Baggins, belongs to a race of beings called Hobbits, who may be only three feet tall and have hairy feet, but in their thinking and sensibility closely resemble those arcadian villagers who so frequently populate British detective stories. For more than a thousand years they have been enjoying an idyllic rural existence in a fertile region called the Shire, unaware of, and incurious about, the world beyond its borders. Actually, the Shire is a tiny oasis in a world which has known better days; great cities of old are now ruins, fertile plains have become barren wastes, roads and bridges have fallen into disrepair, wild beasts and malignant powers stalk abroad. Besides Hobbits with their child-like innocence, there are Elves, who know good and evil but are creatures of an unfallen world, there are Dwarves, and there are Men, good and bad. Some of these are heroic warriors, descended from ancient kings, some are wizards. The latest incarnation of the Enemy is Sauron, Lord of Barad-dûr, the Dark Tower in the Land of Mordor; he commands the services of Trolls, Orcs, and some much more deadly creatures and is daily increasing his hold on the hearts of men.

For a contemporary writer who sets out to create a convincing imaginary world, the task is much more formidable than it was for the authors of the Courtly Romances, since he can

* *The Fellowship of the Ring*. By J. R. R. TOLKIEN. Allen and Unwin. 21s.

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neither write nor expect to be read as if the naturalistic novel and scientific historical research did not exist. It may give some indication of Mr. Tolkien's astonishing powers that I can only find two questions of probability to raise, just as the questions themselves may illustrate the difference between a mid-20th-century reader and a contemporary of Spenser. We are told that the Hobbits have lived for many generations immune from war, pestilence, and famine; and that, normally, they have large families and are long-lived. In that case, I do not quite understand why population pressure has not forced them to emigrate from the Shire. Secondly—a minor point—the drying up of the Sirannon river is explained by the fact that it has been dammed; but the lake so formed has been full for years—where is the water going to?

THE first problem for the maker of an imaginary world is the same as Adam's in Eden; he has to invent names for everything and everyone, and these names must be both apt and consistent with each other. It is hard enough to find the "right" names in a comic world; in a serious one, success seems almost magical. I can only say that in the nominative gift Mr. Tolkien surpasses any writer known to me, living or dead. The landscape of his tale is an extensive one—East to West, from The Iron Hills to The Gulf of Lune, some twelve hundred miles, and North to South, from Carn Dûm to the delta of the Anduin, some eleven hundred. This area contains a number of verbalising species, each with its own nomenclature and its own family and political history, yet the author, without, apparently, the slightest difficulty, finds names which always seem inevitable. Of course, he is a famous philologist, but what colleague of his could invent such convincing examples of a "good" and a "bad" language as the following quotations?

A Elbereth Gilthoniel,
silivren penna míriel
o menel aglar elenath!
Na-chaered palan-díriel
o galadhremmin ennorath,
Fanvilos, le linnathon
nef aear, si nef aearon!

★

Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul, ash nazg thrakatalûk agh burzum-ishi krimpatul.

Again, what other creator of imaginary landscapes has possessed so acute a topographical eye? For a journey to seem real, the reader must be convinced that he is seeing the landscape through which it passes as, given his mode of locomotion and the circumstances of his errand, the traveller himself saw it. By the end of the volume Frodo Baggins has covered some thirteen hundred miles, much of it on foot, and with his senses kept perpetually sharp by fear, watching every inch of the way for signs of his pursuers, yet Mr. Tolkien succeeds in convincing us that there is nothing which his hero noticed which he has forgotten to describe; indeed, so exact is he that a reader who consults the beautiful map at the end of the book will observe immediately that the course of the road between Hoarwell Bridge and Bruinen Ford is erroneously drawn.

In a heroic romance where the situations are those of elemental crisis to which the possible reactions are few, to stand one's ground or to flee, to be faithful or to betray, subtleties of character drawing are neither possible nor relevant. The characters must be representative specimens of a few archetypes, the Wise man, the Strong man, the Cheerful man, the Cautious man, the Lady of Light, the Lord of Darkness, etc. Mr. Tolkien manages very cleverly to give his types an uncommon depth and solidity by providing each of them with a past which is more that of the group to which he belongs than a personal one; what Aragorn, for instance, talks about is the history of the Rangers, not of himself. Only one character, and this may be an idiosyncracy of my own, does not come off. Sam Gamgee, the faithful squire, is certainly a very estimable person and I think that we are meant to love him; but, in me, he arouses a strong desire to kick him all round the block.

PERHAPS Mr. Tolkien's greatest achievement is to have written a heroic romance which seems wholly relevant to the realities of our concrete historical existence. When reading medieval examples of this genre, enjoyable as they are, one is sometimes tempted to ask the Knightly hero—"Is your trip necessary?" Even in the Quest for the San Graal, success or failure is only of importance to those who undertake it. One cannot altogether escape the suspicion that, in relation to such knights, the word "vocation" is a high-faluting term for a

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game which gentlemen with private means are free to play while the real work of the real world is done by "villains."

In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, on the other hand, the fate of the Ring will affect the daily lives of thousands who have never heard of its existence. Further, as in the Bible and many fairy stories, the hero is not a Knight, endowed by birth and breeding with exceptional *aretè*, but only a hobbit pretty much like all other hobbits. It is not the wise Gandalf or the mighty Aragorn but Frodo Baggins who is called to undertake this deadly dangerous mission which he would much rather avoid, and if one asks why he and not one of a hundred others like him, the only answer is that chance, or Providence, has chosen, and he must obey.

If there are any people for whom it would be dangerous to read *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and I think there may be some, they will be those who draw too literal a parallel between it and our present historical situation. In a romance it is right and proper that evil ideas should be incarnate as evil beings; in history it is a disastrous notion. We live in a time, unfortunately, when, if one is thinking of evil ideas, one can locate on the atlas the positions of Dol Guldur and Barad-dûr (I think I can identify Minas Tirith, though the *New Statesman* would not agree with me), but it will go ill with us if, in consequence, we regard all who live East of the Anduin as Orcs to be exterminated.

I have nothing more to say about this wonderful story except that it is very inconsiderate of the publishers not to have issued simultaneously the two volumes which are to follow, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*; the suspense of waiting to know what happens to the Ring Bearer is intolerable. I hope that, in the second edition, they will place the topographical map in a pocket instead of gumming it to the inside cover, for most readers are going to do what I did, tear it out in order to follow with the text, which involves the risk of its getting lost. Finally, those who, like myself, have some dwarf blood in their veins, would be delighted if Mr. Tolkien could see his way to providing us with a geological map as well.

W. H. Auden

"DEAR LORD M"

THE watershed moments of history are always fascinating to read about. It is very doubtful if they really exist. When we think of distinct and definite switches from one age to another, as from feudalism to the Renaissance, or from monarchical to republican France, we are almost certainly indulging fancy and not interpreting facts. But we are probably better off with the fancy than without it, for it does help us, as a scientific analysis does not, to catch a past mood. In actual life we often seem to pass ridges of experience beyond whose summits all directions are changed. The years 1914 and 1939 both look like watersheds to us living now. The accession of Queen Victoria five years after the Reform Bill seemed to many people living in the 19th century to be one of the most striking of all such points of destiny. The 18th century was over, the new age entered into its inheritance. To give a last perfect touch to the vision, the young sovereign who was to give her unusual name to her era was actually to be seen setting forth on her royal career guided by an elderly gentleman who summed up in himself the character of the preceding age.

In a pleasing book published in 1939, Lord David Cecil gave an account of William Lamb's youth and young manhood. He now gives us the sequel,* a record of the later years, from the time when Lamb became Secretary of State for Ireland a year before the death of his terrible wife, to his own death in 1848 as Lord Melbourne, twenty-one years after his first Ministerial appointment, and seven years after the termination of his Premiership. It is

* *Lord M.* By DAVID CECIL. Constable. 21s.

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a sympathetic study of a man about whom both his contemporaries and later generations have found it difficult to make up their minds. He was enigmatic though not deep, yet part of his enigma lies in the fact that he was much deeper than he liked to appear. He will probably always puzzle people. Here, beautifully set forth, are all the facts necessary to an understanding of his character and career, and to the formation of a judgement which, because of the man's very character, is likely to be tentative.

NEITHER his public nor his private life was very edifying. He was Home Secretary and then Prime Minister in what were probably the most crucial years of our internal history since the middle 17th century, and yet his name is not associated with any great act of state, or with any great movement, except as a minor and unwilling promoter of political reform. His political ideas were unenterprising to the point of dullness. "I like what is tranquil and stable," he once said, and Lord David Cecil rightly detects a key-statement. He was clever enough to see that static conservatism could not give him lasting tranquility or stability so he encouraged a minimum of political progress and freedom. He was not hard-hearted and, provided the happiness and well-being of the nobility and gentry were first secured, he had no objection to some enlargement of opportunity for all. Perhaps because he recognised that this was a monstrous point of view, he gave way to escapism to an extent which is surprising. He could not bear to be told about the darker side of life, and he disapproved of Dickens for depicting the lot of the poor with unpleasant exactness. This was the kind of man who was at the head of affairs during part of what may have been the greatest social crisis in our history, and of course the very fact that he was complacent and uninspiring, and yet contrived to hold office, is his title to fame. An enthusiast might willingly have caused the storm to break. To Melbourne, enthusiasm meant hysteria and nothing else. His mediocrity helped to spare us a revolution.

His worst deed as Home Secretary was the condemnation of the Tolpuddle Trade Unionists to seven years' transportation, and we can know from Archbishop Ullathorne's record what such a sentence meant in suffering.

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The Tolpuddlers were technically guilty and morally innocent. Lord David Cecil admits the blemish on his hero but urges that he was misled by his subordinates. The agitation against this hideous piece of injustice ought to have opened his eyes, but his escapism got the better of him again; he listened to the praises of his supporters, and allowed the sentence to be carried out. In the end he undid the deed with a bad grace.

A year later John Russell wrote to Melbourne asking him to pardon the labourers. Melbourne's first impulse was to resist. He was sure the labourers deserved all they got, he said. Anyway the matter was settled; why, oh why bring it up again? John Russell, however, his conscientiously held principles now vigorously in operation, returned to the attack. Melbourne began to think that resistance would involve more trouble than concession. "I myself do not care what is done about the labourers," he remarked with cheerful impatience.

There is a defence for Melbourne in this bad business, and it is curious that, instead of trying to help his hero out with charm of manner, Lord David Cecil does not give it, for it is to be found in an incident mentioned in another part of this book. In 1830 Lord Suffield attempted to win Melbourne to a land settlement scheme for the relief of agricultural labourers. Melbourne told him that he understood the scheme and for that reason wished to say nothing about it. "How is this to be explained?" asked Suffield. "Because I consider it hopeless," answered Melbourne. It must always be remembered, in explanation of much past social oppression and economic cruelty, that before the second half of the 19th century there was little evidence for the belief that poverty could be abolished or even substantially reduced in the world. In those days revolutionary action even of the mildest kind, as at Tolpuddle, could appear wicked because it was valueless: it was endangering what we had, for no possible gain. An England without poverty was still as unimaginable to most men in the eighteen thirties and forties as an India or China without poverty is to us.

MELBOURNE's private life was entirely of the 18th century. He ate and drank with the greater appetite of pre-Victorian times. He "talked broad." He cultivated a classical taste in literature and wrote paltry epigrams in the style of La Rochefoucauld. He was deeply read in theology. (Our pastiche-drawn notions of the age of reason make us forget that it was an age of sermons.) He indulged the lower pleasures without the later conscience about such matters, and there was a good moment when a morning visitor to his London house found a servant sweeping away débris which included a feathered bonnet. He had all the class arrogance of a Chesterfield, and the fact that he belonged to the highest circle of fashion and at the same time came of relatively new family did not soften him in this respect. He loved Caroline Norton (chastely it seems) but saw nothing odd or repulsive in his refusal to obtain her admission to court. There is a not very pleasant story of Melbourne taking up poor Robert Haydon for his amusement ("a new type to be added to his collection of human oddities"), leading the poor man on, pretending to admire his theories and then dropping him with deft elegance. Haydon was not of the class that mattered. But there were beautiful things too in this private life. He had a son who was mentally defective, and to this boy he gave all the love that a father can give. According to Melbourne's own account (probably coloured by imagination) his son died in his first moment of sanity. And then there was Melbourne's last noble love for the young Queen.

There can be no question but that this penultimate episode in Melbourne's life is the climax of his story, and if Lord David Cecil is sometimes open to criticism in his handling of earlier scenes, he is most satisfying at this point of his book where his readers most want to be satisfied. Lord David Cecil has had access to much unpublished documentation and he replaces much guesswork with authentic record of fact. The well-known story is now fuller but remains much the same as before; the familiar outline of the familiar group—the departing 18th century teaching the new Victorian age its interests and its duties—need not be altered. Thank goodness for that.

THE changes in emphasis in the story which result from this book are ones which popular imagination has often anticipated. The elderly gentleman (for in true 18th century style Melbourne was elderly at fifty-eight), whom the young Victoria inherited as her first Prime Minister, fell in love with her in the most literal sense. That this strengthened his influence over her followed as a matter of

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course, but Lord David Cecil indicated with rare delicacy of perception how it weakened his influence too. Falling in love with Queen Victoria had its own problems, and it seems that Melbourne grew frightened of her and helpless against her will in a way Sir Robert Peel would never have done. But then Peel was unlikely to fall in love with her whereas Melbourne was doomed from the outset. The Queen gave him all the filial devotion that she had never been able to give her mother, and which he had never been able to receive from his poor son. The crisis came in 1839. Melbourne's Government failed and died, and it was time for these mutually devoted people to part. But neither the Queen nor Melbourne could bring themselves to do so, and they found an excuse to stay together in the absurd "Bedchamber question." Melbourne tried very hard to behave correctly in this ridiculous crisis, but to behave perfectly he needed to be hard, and he could not be hard to the sovereign who stood to him as a daughter. He set the Constitution at naught and enjoyed two more years of his passion. When the final separation did come in 1841 it was relatively painless on the Queen's side. She was now happily married. She cried a little but not with the anguish of 1839. It would appear that even at that moment she was rather glad than otherwise to be rid of him. She had no intention of prolonging her intimate companionship with "dear Lord M."

The last part of the story is less pleasing than had been formerly supposed. For the truth is that soon after his resignation the Queen dropped Melbourne in the hard way that young growing people drop their once loved tutors and elders, and in the even harder way that crowned persons must needs drop favourites, and especially political favourites, who have become inconvenient. He was too much in love to practise stoicism over the pain he suffered from royal neglect. He sought her and was sometimes rebuffed. Of the last phase Lord David Cecil wisely remarks that we might wish that the old statesman had been able to leave the scene with tact and grace, but that he could not do so shows, not only the reality of his devotion to the Queen, but the nobility of his conduct in trying to leave the Premiership before he did, and in going to such pains to get the Queen to like and respect Peel.

5

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As has been indicated by a quotation, the book is not flawlessly written. The charm is sometimes ladled out in too much profusion, and the style of the writing throughout often errs on the side of too much gentility. This appears from some "elegant variations" and an excessive employment of the terms "alas" and "indeed," not in any way compensated for by an equal over-use of the word "row" or by self-conscious colloquialisms such as "to put her in the know." But the book does succeed in its difficult object, which is to give a clear view of an extremely complex man who, more than any other man of his generation, symbolised the extinction of one age and its conjunction to another. The author makes no secret of his feeling for his subject. We are asked to like Melbourne and we do so because when his picture is drawn with strict fairness as it is here, we recognise with admiration that he can just stand this severe treatment. We can put it another way. He was a thoroughly second-rate statesman whose last notable contribution to history was to misunderstand Lord Durham's great mission to Canada, and he was not quite a first-rate man, but we like him in the end because he was so free of the politician's curse of vanity. He lived in the limelight and never pretended to be anything more than he was.

Christopher Sykes

CRIME STORY

[History] can only be visualised and written about as a crime story. The criminals, of course (and some are exceptionally unpleasant ones), are the endless series of persons who figure as the heads of States. . . .

The explanation of this terrible paradox, that the state should always be in the hands of ruffians or of feeble-minded persons, is that the enormous majority of men are barbarians, philistines, and mentally inhabit an "heroic" age, if not a peculiarly violent Stone Age. And upon that popular plane the political world has its being. [Yet] a number of creative "sports" are born into every successive generation of uncreative gang-rule. . . .

It is suggested that the principal figures in the history-book should be those heroic creators who attempt to build something, usually to be knocked down by the gang of criminals above mentioned, with the assistance, of course, of the unenlightened herd. The actual rulers are not necessarily concerned in any way with these creative individuals; it is usually left to members of the ill-disposed majority forcibly to prevent the success of the designs of the creative few: or the contemporary wielders of power, may for some reason, do no particular mischief; may omit to stage a bloodbath, debase the currency, pillage and tax to death the community. . . . They may be absorbed in their pleasures, or once in a way they may even possess a streak of goodness. Anyway, in such periods, the creative minds are relatively free to carry out their civilising work. Such work is usually destroyed within a few decades by a remarkable outbreak of bestial barbarity. . . .

To conclude, history can only be written as a tragedy, because all that is worth writing about that has come down to us has been denied its full development.

THESE disjointed fragments—I wish that in the manner of Victorian critics I could have employed my first ten pages in an attempt to quote adequately—must serve to give a "caricatural idea" of the views of Professor René Harding, hero of Mr. Wyndham Lewis' new novel *Self Condemned*.* The time is 1939. The Professor, who is a man of integrity, feels that he cannot hold at the same time both these views and the chair of History in an English university; he feels equally that he might as well absent himself from the particular imminent bloodbath that the contemporary wielders of power are not omitting to stage. He therefore takes ship to Canada: and most of the book is concerned with his spiritual isolation there, leading with all the precision

* *Self Condemned*. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. Methuen. 15s.

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of an immense machine to spiritual degeneration, spiritual bankruptcy, and spiritual death.

It will be gathered that this work is not cheerful: in fact the last forty or so pages make more desolate reading than I can well remember elsewhere. Yet the final effect is not dispiriting. For one thing, *Self Condemned* is very finely constructed: it has all the clean lines and terrible movement of a Sophoclean tragedy—surely the exactness of tragedy is one of the chief agents of its power of catharsis? For another, the book is packed with intellectual content: Mr. Lewis has always thrown off sufficient ideas in a couple of pages to keep a lesser novelist busy for a life-time, and the new work is no exception. Indeed, although much of the old savage froth is gone, I should say that the power of the stream is stronger than ever before. *Self Condemned* is a "late" work, and shows most of the characteristics of the genre: quietness, aridity, solidity, strength, resolution.

In many ways, therefore, I believe this is Mr. Lewis' best book to date. The earlier works bristled with a magnificent energy and attack; but they were too rich in this respect to be entirely digestible. *Tarr*, *The Apes of God*, *Snooty Baronet*, are comic masterpieces; but in them the things hated always mastered the hater, so that by the very exuberance of his hatred they tended to waste him fruitlessly. The struggle now is bitterer than before; but this time it is the author who emerges the victor.

Lewis-fans (who have waited fifteen years for this novel) will, however, be pleased to find that none of the old gay tricks have been abandoned, although now they are applied in this soberer and (as I think) deadlier fashion. We have, for instance, the well-remembered Comic Reiteration, by which it is most delightfully proved—I can use no other word—that one of the minor characters is none other than a one-eyed Yak in Wimbledon High Street: he is left absolutely no alternative. Here too is the old Elegant Variation:

> There was a fairly large living-room, in which they found Mrs. McKenzie playing the piano. . . . Hostesses who, on the arrival of guests, are discovered playing the piano, received from René a very bad mark. The figure rising from the keyboard to greet one was not popular with him. To break off in the middle of a Nocturne to shake one's hand with a dazzling smile was not a device which recommended the woman who made use of it to

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René. That a room into which guests are designed shortly to arrive should be impregnated with mazurkas or pavans appeared to him in as bad taste as if some perfume had been sprayed into the air a few minutes before the guests' arrival.

And here again are the familiar Human Automata, the creatures with "minimal reality-coefficient," the gland-directed robots spouting "free-will," the "boldly-bland-eyed sex-trap" who seduces the "hairy satyr with built-in ho-ho."

If, with Mr. Lewis, we are to conceive of mankind as composed almost exclusively of *homo stultus*, leavened with a nugatory sprinkling of that rare "sport" *homo sapiens*, whose efforts towards creation the former always "denies (their) full development;" then surely we are to see in the author himself a peculiarly melancholy instance of his own law—and Mr. Lewis of course intends us so to see him. One of the subtler and more effective manners in which *stultus* circumvents *sapiens* is, as I have suggested, by tempting him into extravagant hate: he provides such an asphyxiating jungle of "general mess and imprecision" that *sapiens* feels, rightly or wrongly, that before he begins to create it will be absolutely necessary to destroy. The energy expended on clearing the site will, *stultus* hopes, leave him with insufficient energy to build the temple.

Wyndham Lewis has always been a splendid destroyer; merely to watch the rippling of his intellectual muscles as his broad sweeps toppled tree-top after tree-top was and is an immense pleasure, even though the trees (which seem to have been watered with hydra-blood) spring up still faster behind him than they fall before. But most other writers tackle the dilemma of *sapiens* (in which they necessarily find themselves involved to a greater or lesser degree) in a more sidelong fashion, and pose it in rather different terms: "how shall a man live in the jungle except he be friendly with the beasts?"

One device of the novelist is to pose the problem in extreme, laboratory, terms: the solitary individual (the last uneliminated specimen of *sapiens*) against the modern Police State, which is of course Stultus Transcendent. The construction of novels of this type rarely varies: the hero, Mr. Sapiens, is shown as a hitherto-to unsuspected nonconformist in Stultus-land; his nonconformity is early discovered, and the state then takes peculiar trouble to investigate it, the main portion of the book consisting of a sort of duel, moral and intellectual, between Mr. Sapiens and the person appointed as his chief inquisitor—a renegade *sapiens*, an unsporting "sport," whom we may call Mr. Anti-sapiens. The nature of the duel, the levels upon which it is conducted, depend of course upon those aspects of *stultismo* that loom the largest bogeys on the author's horizon—the pursuit of pleasure, for Mr. Huxley; of intellectual absolutism, for George Orwell; and principally serve to distinguish one of these novels from another. In the last chapter, of course, Mr. Sapiens meets an end more or less sticky; but the gloom is a little lightened by the author's closing hint that even now Sapiens Mi. is gnawing away somewhere in the basement. Orwell, Huxley, Koestler, have provided us with prime examples, though the "State Inquisitor *v.* Individual" plot as such goes back very much earlier; in many ways *1984* is only *Crime and Punishment* with a total reversal of values; and *The Trial* and *The Castle* deal with exactly the same situation at a metaphysical level.

The latest recruit to this class is M. Jean Malaquais' *The Joker*,* translated (into American) by Herma Briffault. It is rather a favourable specimen, bred (I feel) out of Orwell by Kafka but nevertheless showing, in the manner of a fertile cross, new characteristics possessed by neither parent. The chief Stultus bogey-characteristic is here his tendency towards blunderingly omnipotent bureaucracy: the author treats this in what used to be called a "vein of high fantasy," with the result that we can read the book either as a prophecy of the future or as a satirically heightened version of the present—a double-aspect of which the author takes full advantage. Indeed his "waking nightmare" is very much that of any modern city with its salient characteristics a little magnified—bigger bargains at the bargain-stores, larger queues at the pensions counter, even lighter music on the Light Programme.

It is, I think, a good book, irrespective of its class, simply because it possesses straightforward literary merits. It is high-spirited and intelligent, and avoids, even by implication, the trite "democratic" moralising to which this

* *The Joker*. By JEAN MALAQUAIS. Gollancz. 12s. 6d.

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sort of novel is usually only too prone. It is exceedingly exciting: and in places very funny.

I recommend this one. However I am left with one sad every-day reflection: in real Stultus-lands Mr. Sapiens is by no means treated with such destructive lovingness by the State—he is liquidated, *without argument*, at the same time as a large number of other persons also suspected of being able to read and write.

"Yes, but if he were liquidated without argument, there would be no book."

"Precisely."

"DIPLOMATIC CONCLUSIONS,"* by M. Roger Peyrefitte, is an investigation of Mr. Lewis' "criminals," the Heads of State—in this case the *corps diplomatique* of France. Apart from some remarkably perfunctory *amour*, it consists simply of a diplomatic history of that country during the period of the recent war. It is presumably largely autobiographical, and the protagonists are for the most part actual French statesmen, living or dead: it is told, moreover, with such a wealth of cynicism and wicked anecdote that one wonders why, even under the indulgent law of France, there is not material for a dozen libel actions here.

One of the author's principal aims is to clear the name of Pétain. He overstresses his case, but it is (I think) a case that at this juncture needed to be overstressed: the glib identification of Vichy = Traitor, Resistance = Patriot, has long required this sharp corrective; it has sounded with peculiar ungraciousness upon the lips of those who have not themselves undergone conquest and occupation.

In general, however, it would be difficult to imagine a bitterer exposé of the "criminal" élite. Yet the profound cynicism of M. Peyrefitte arises, as so often, out of still profounder loyalties: to France; to the *corps diplomatique* in which a man may at the highest level (in the author's view) serve France; to the ideals of personal integrity without which a man is not fit to serve. These loyalties are curiously unquestioning. It is a little hair-raising to the English reader to learn that the prime causes of the last war were the blood-lust of England and the intransigence of Poland, though it may be necessary to M. Peyrefitte's brand of French patriotism to think so. The reader may equally

* *Diplomatic Conclusions*. By ROGER PEYREFITTE. Thames and Hudson. 13s. 6d.

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be brought up short by the unreality, snobbery, and arrogance of the confirmed diplomatic mind: a country exists solely in, and for the sake of, its diplomats; history is no more than the record-sheet of diplomatic decisions. Economic, ideological, historical, factors are absent from this world of protocol and lunches:

> Now, since Hitler's stupefaction at Britain's attitude was soon known . . . it was possible to conclude that this whole formidable conflict [the 1939–45 war] was the result of a (diplomatic) misunderstanding [!].

In some ways this declaration of faith of a "good" diplomat, his (under the circumstances) criminal ignorance of the very nature of the forces that he fondly imagines himself to be controlling, gives a clearer insight into *one* of the causes of war than all the scabrous devilries and absurdities that appear in his lovingly documented chronicles of the "bad." I should add that these last, however tragical in their context, leave nothing to be desired in the way of scurrilous farce.

SO MUCH for the jungle. My last three books are concerned with being friendly with the beasts.

In the old days before the war, the problem of peaceful co-existence for the sapient writer was not a very difficult one: he struck a few gay chords on his Orphic lyre, the monkeys were sufficiently amused to chuck him a few nuts, and he went away to nibble these in some decently secluded corner. Nowadays he gets the shells, if that. Consequently he is obliged to look about for a profession, and usually finds himself in the end, for a variety of reasons, in a "provincial" university. Against this background a whole new school of post-war novelists is arising: Mr. John Wain and Mr. Kingsley Amis were early in the field, and in the next ten years we may expect to see a host of followers. The plan of this type of novel is usually picaresque, and the milieu is that declassé no-man's-land at the intersection of the academic and the arty, and heavy with rumours of rather dubious wealth around the bend: for some cause that I cannot wholly fathom, the alternative to all this, the "Good Life," is invariably expressed in the person and profession of the Male Hospital Orderly. Miss Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net** is an amusing light novel of this class. The hero, though not actually on the staff of a provincial university, is not far off it: he succeeds, I am glad to say, after a series of extravagantly unlikely adventures in pursuit of the dubious cash, in his ambition of becoming a Male Hospital Orderly. One remarkable feature of the book is Miss Murdoch's success as a male impersonator; but I hope she will revert to her own sex next time and discuss the hazards of the female. They should be worth hearing.

The Disguises of Love,† by Mr. Robie Macauley, is a straightforward "old-fashioned" novel, set this time in an American provincial university. By "old-fashioned," I mean that it is concerned principally with personal relationships, in this case those of an American "professor," his wife, his mistress, and his child. The story is told by the members of the professor's family in turn, so that frequently we get three very differing versions of the same incident; and Mr. Macauley extracts the maximum amount of irony inherent in this method, without falling into the trap of making himself, the author, appear too like God. This is a clever and kindly book, dealing with intelligent people: the portrait of the adolescent "near-genius" son is particularly convincing.

Finally, a first novel by Mr. Michael Croft, called *Spare the Rod*.§ The hero-author is here a schoolmaster in a "secondary modern"—a location usually avoided by the sapient writer, who may well be as sapient there as in a university but will have very much less opportunity to be a writer. The unfortunate young Mr. Sanders finds himself in charge of the roughest, toughest class in what is on the whole a remarkably unpleasant establishment, and the book shows how he does his best to make something of this practically impossible assignment.

This is not a very clever, amusing, or even well-written novel; but it has qualities of honesty and simplicity that I find engaging. Integrity, humility, and idealism will carry an author a long way. Hard-working, rather

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* *Under the Net*. By IRIS MURDOCH. Chatto and Windus. 12s. 6d.

† *The Disguises of Love*. By ROBIE MACAULEY. Harrap. 12s. 6d.

§ *Spare the Rod*. By MICHAEL CROFT. Longmans. 10s. 6d.

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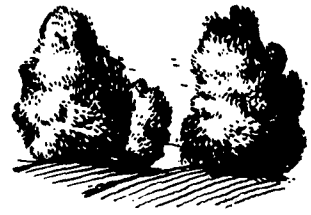

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stupid, Mr. Sanders may not be a very important person in himself, and most of the characters in the other novels I have spoken about would despise, or at best dismiss, him: nevertheless he alone is actually fighting in the trenches of the *stultus-sapiens* war. They are the brass-hats and intelligence types, he the foot-slogging private: and I have not much doubt in my own mind as to which, in a real emergency, would be the more disposable.

Hilary Corke

ALL ABOUT INDIA

AMONG the many to whom Indian independence came as a release is the Englishman who is a student of Indian history and a lover of Indian culture. Before independence, the polemical atmosphere made everything suspect—the Englishman regarded everything written by an Indian as an attempt to prove that India owed nothing to Britain save the destruction of an allegedly once flourishing civilisation, already ancient when its conquerors were clad in woad; while Indians assumed that anything written by Englishmen concealed the moral that Indians were incompetent to rule themselves. An Indian could not praise the glories of Asoka without it being suspected that his object was to prove that Indian unity existed before the British "divided to conquer," and an Englishman could not praise the same glories without the Indian suspecting that his object was to drive home the point that India was not a united whole until the British made it so. Since independence, both Englishman and Indian have been freed of this burden of suspicion, and it is now possible to re-examine men and movements in a more frank and hospitable way.

One man who needs such re-examination is Rabindranath Tagore. From the aspirations of Ram Mohun Ray in the 19th century, there sprang the Brahma-Samaj movement, with its conception of the renaissance of India's culture, rooted in its own ancient civilisation but purged of its medieval accretions and revivified by the assimilation of all that was best in Europe. Tagore personified the finest flowering of this Indo-British cultural ideal and made to it the biggest single surviving contribution.

As Miss Indu Dutt says in her preface to *A Tagore Testament*,* the first point in understanding Tagore is to grasp his influence on the Bengali language to which he has given a new colour and structure, making it deeper and richer in range of expression of ideas and emotions. In turn, the influence of Bengali over all other indigenous literatures has been at once profound and on the side of modernisation. Because he broke through the sterile conventions and Sanskritic clichés admired in the 19th century, Tagore was violently attacked by all the pandits. Yet for years now, his books have been standard texts in the schools of Bengal.

If Mahatma Gandhi had the genius to create a situation in which independence was inevitable, and if the British had the genius to leave India gracefully, thus rendering political cooperation possible between two friendly and sovereign states, then to Tagore must go the credit for the possible permanence of existing cultural ties. It remains for the West to ensure two-way traffic in cultural development, for if India has absorbed much from the West, the West has hitherto paid insufficient attention to the treasures of Indian culture. There are few happier introductions to these treasures than Tagore's writings. He never published an autobiography, but from time to time he expounded his aims and ideas, and Miss Indu Dutt has collected and translated these essays which, studded with poems that illustrate his themes and with comments that throw light on his poetry, constitute a spiritual profile.

* *A Tagore Testament*. Translated by Indu Dutt. Meridian Books. 10s. 6d.

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The personality that emerges from these thoughtful pages is modest, tender, a lover of nature and of his fellows, and deeply religious in an unostentatious and unproselytising way.

The highest praise that one can offer Miss Dutt is to say that these essays do not read like translations but like the original work of a rich imagination with a splendid control of its medium in prose and in verse. There are over fifty poems, all but one or two of which are here translated for the first time.

BOTH before and since independence, public opinion in India has been formed largely by civil servants, radically-minded politicians, journalists, and the professional middle classes; people on fixed incomes who are temperamentally suspicious of business men as "profiteers." As a multimillionaire industrialist, Mr. G. D. Birla's name, known outside India only to a handful of specialists, has been built up by the Left in India as the arch-capitalist bogey-man. Nor did his successful pioneering of Indian industry in spheres once exclusively occupied by British firms endear him to pre-independence British interests. Now, Mr. Birla reveals something of the man behind the myth by publishing with a minimum of comment necessary to identify time, place, and context, a selection * of the letters that he exchanged over the years with Mahatma Gandhi, Lord Lothian, Lord Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare), Lord Halifax, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Lord Linlithgow, Sir Winston Churchill, and many other prominent personalities, together with reports of his conversations with them. For the first time, the man in the street in India and in Britain will become aware of what a few have always known: the considerable part that Mr. Birla played behind the scenes in furthering simultaneously the cause of his country's independence and of Indo-British friendship. While these letters and conversations have their interest for the non-specialist, the historian will seize upon them as revealing motives hitherto obscure, correcting perspectives hitherto distorted, and containing many a new sidelight on public figures, such as this comment of Mr. Birla on Sir Winston Churchill in 1937 at the time of Edward VIII's

* *In the Shadow of the Mahatma.* By G. D. BIRLA. Longmans. 10s. 6d.

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abdication: "There is no vanity about him and he has a childlike simplicity. He had the honesty to admit to me that when he stood up in favour of the ex-King he did not know that public opinion was so much against him."

Mr. Birla always favoured taking whatever concessions the British offered and working them for all that they were worth. Had the Congress Party adopted this view and co-operated in the working of the 1919 Act, it is arguable that India would by 1937 have gained independence without partition. The Congress resistance and non-cooperation naturally aroused corresponding attitudes in the British bureaucracy, who were after all responsible for law and order in India, and the march of events was slowed down.

CAN THE 35,000,000 Muslims who live in India be turned into satisfied and loyal citizens? Or is Hindu-Muslim animosity to continue indefinitely? These were among the pressing questions facing the independent Indian government when, in 1949, it took the unusual step of inviting a foreigner, an American psychologist, Dr. Gardner Murphy, to organise a study of social tensions. In his descriptions of town and village life as seen from an entirely new angle, and in his analyses of the causes of friction, Dr. Murphy is to be congratulated on one of the most original books* ever written about India, particularly to be recommended to the "old hands" who have known all the answers for years. Dr. Murphy covers not only tensions between Hindu and Muslim but between caste and outcaste Hindus. He rightly insists, a point often overlooked, that caste emerged as an attempt to meet indigenous social needs and was largely successful until the comparatively recent introduction of Western social conceptions and industrial methods initiated a slow disintegration, particularly in the cities, giving rise to increasing friction. Dr. Murphy analyses the psychology of a minority, and shows how Muslims and outcastes see themselves and contrasts this with the almost unrecognisable picture that they present to caste Hindus. The remedies are inevitably long-term, but if Dr. Murphy's book, with its wealth of first-hand human observation, secures a wide distribution in India (and in Pakistan where there is a huge Hindu minority), it should help to re-orientate those responsible for the formation of public opinion; it should be compulsory reading for politicians and newspaper editors. By implication, Dr. Murphy does not seem to think much of British rule and he subscribes to the misleading idea that it lasted 200 years; in fact, in 1805 the British ruled less than a quarter of India, and they did not consolidate themselves over the whole sub-continent until around 1849.

MR. R. E. WOLSELEY, who has edited *Journalism in Modern India*,* is one of the technical experts that America is lending to help in speeding India's progress. His book is a valuable compilation of facts, nowhere else available, on the history and contemporary situation of the Indian press. It also includes chapters on writing techniques: here it is not always the highest ideal of Western journalism that is held up for Indian edification but too often an uncritical exposition of current popular practice. For example, explaining the mysteries of feature writing, Mr. P. D. Tandon describes how he covered the activities of Miss "Gussy" Moran, the glamorous tennis star of lace-panties fame. Since Miss Moran went to India to play tennis, one would have thought that the essential was to report her play. Mr. Tandon, however, left that to his uninitiated competitors and went out after the "local angle story." He hired a camel and photographed Miss Moran on its back. He took her to the bazaar to be photographed buying sarees. He infiltrated her into the Nehru home and photographed her there with a Gandhi cap on her head, and he ends candidly: "I created a subject, as it were, where there was none." Mr. Tandon is also proud of the "scoops" that he obtained by interviewing Pandit Nehru's cook and Mahatma Gandhi's barber.

Mr. Tandon's point of view is a portent. Nationalist critics of the Indian press reproach it for its "excessive" interest in what goes on in foreign countries. Seeing that the average Western newspaper contains little if any foreign news, but is filled with trivial items of provincial interest, these critics conclude that

* *In the Minds of Men.* By GARDNER MURPHY. Basic Books Inc. New York. $4.50.

* *Journalism in Modern India.* Edited by R. E. WOLSELEY. Asia Publishing House. Bombay Rs. 7/8.

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the foreign press is "patriotic" in its concentration on local news and that Indian papers are "unpatriotic" and still under the influence of "outmoded" ways. As literacy rises, however, standards must fall, in India as they did in the West, and in competing to satisfy the tastes of the uneducated literate, the Indian papers, given sufficient training in Mr. Tandon's methods, should have no difficulty in manufacturing enough synthetic domestic news to squeeze out all the serious and "unpatriotic" foreign items.

It is only fair to add that the names of the contributors to this book will be known as the leaders of their profession to everyone familiar with Indian journalism, and that between them they have written some first-rate chapters, covering (1) the English-language press, (2) the Indian-language press (a chapter that contains much common sense rarely heard about the often despised "vernaculars" and which should be invaluable to foreign advertisers), (3) the news agencies, (4) writing and editing techniques, and (5) related fields, including PRO work, printing, radio, business and legal, which should be useful not only to the specialist but to the student of the contemporary Indian scene. Of the individual authors, Mr. S. Natarajan's reminiscent chapter on his experiences under the giants of the past will delight all old *koi hais*, while many a practising Western special correspondent could read with profit the racy and chastening advice offered by Mr. K. Shridharani, the diplomatic correspondent of the *Amitra Bazaar Patrika*.

MRS. NAYANTARA SAHGAL, who is Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's second daughter and Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru's niece, has her full share of the Nehru family's Kashmiri good looks and charm. In these agreeably light pages, * she shows herself an adept of the contemporary American dead-pan style of reporting, which the *New Yorker* has made so popular. During the war, Mrs. Sahgal, and her sister Lekha, were sent to Wellesley Women's College in America. She describes the efforts at mutual comprehension between herself and her American college friends: "But if you don't have dates in India, what do you do in the evenings?" And of sarees: "Suppose it fell off? Do you feel absolutely secure in it, without pins?" "It hasn't fallen off for several thousand years, I replied."

Mrs. Sahgal writes of the periodical absences of her mother, father, sister, and uncle in prison with an absence of bitterness that makes a British reviewer wince for the past and rejoice for the present. She was, however, mistaken when she told her horrified and sympathetic American college friends that Indians were gaoled for demanding independence. The columns of the Indian press were daily filled with such demands throughout the war. If you sought imprisonment, you had to break the law positively, e.g. by exhortations calculated to lead to a breach of the peace, or to induce troops not to fight, or government servants to fail in their duty.

THE principles of a great statesman who made a firsthand study of foreign policy have been summarised thus: "If you are not as strong as your neighbour, make peace with him; if you are stronger, fight him; if you are

* *Prison and Chocolate Cake.* By Nayantara Sahgal. Gollancz. 15s.

Pictures *from an* Institution

RANDALL JARRELL

'One of the wittiest books of modern times.' — ORVILLE PRESCOTT: *New York Times.*

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strong enough not to fear attack but not strong enough to destroy your enemy, be neutral; if you are not strong enough to defend your neutrality alone, look for an ally." He does not conclude explicitly that, since it is impossible to stay neutral if you have neighbours with hostile ideologies who are strong enough to violate your neutrality at their convenience, you had better seek the friendship of that power bloc with which your safety and ideology coincides, and do this before your neutrality leaves you friendless; but such a conclusion is implicit in his writings. This statesman is not an imaginary figure; nor is he Machiavelli or Mr. John Foster Dulles. He is Kautilya, who in the 4th century B.C. was the able prime minister of the great and successful Indian state of Magdha, and whose political philosophy is discussed in Mr. D. Mackenzie Brown's *The White Umbrella.** Whether the views expressed by the father of Indian political science (who, be it noted, was a contemporary of Aristotle) have any application today, I leave others to decide.

Professor Mackenzie Brown's book is clearly the result of much research and thought and it seems a pity that one who is so obviously a well-equipped scholar should have contented himself with excerpts and exposition without any attempt at critical assessment. Kautilya's views seem in direct contradiction with those advanced, for example, by Sri Aurobindo Ghose, who was hailed by the Vice-President of the Indian Republic as "the greatest intellectual of our age" and who is quoted by Mr. Brown with an approval as blandly unqualified as that extended to Kautilya. The guileless may take this in their stride; those who have read no history may be impressed by Aurobindo Ghose's description of the great "civilising mission" which India carried out in Indo-China many centuries before similar claims were advanced on behalf of France; others will be irritated. However, as a judicious anthologist in a fascinating and hitherto unexplored field, Mr. Mackenzie Brown deserves full marks.

Jossleyn Hennessy

* *The White Umbrella.* By D. MACKENZIE BROWN. Cambridge University Press. 28s.

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

THE British have always been great travellers and, not unnaturally, it is the foreign scene that has often inspired many of our best writers. During the war, and indeed for some years after, it was generally felt that the impossibility of travelling to foreign countries for one's own pleasure was one of the greatest deprivations with which we had to contend. Now that conditions are easier, we are beginning to get what may well become a deluge of travel books, and some of the critics are beginning to jib. Mr. Anthony Quinton, for instance, in a recent broadcast, has suggested that "travel books, by their very nature, cannot aspire to the formal qualities of the major imaginative genres—novel, play, or long poem." If by this is meant that a novel, as such, is necessarily more worthy of consideration than a travel book I believe it to be untrue. I am not here concerned with those many remarkable stories of true adventure (wartime escapes, lonely crossings of the oceans, and so on) whose success Mr. J. B. Priestley so greatly deplores because they are mostly written by what he calls unprofessional authors, but to what are now patronisingly described as "Cultured Travelogues."

Nobody in his senses would claim that the greatest travel book ever written is of literary importance equal to, for instance, *War and Peace*, but it does seem to me that a good travel book is of far more value than the average novel. Books such as *Arabia Deserta*, *Eöthen*, or, to take something more modern, the many works of Norman Douglas or Freya Stark, do not depend entirely upon their content; they have a literary value apart from their subject-matter. *Arabia Deserta* happens to be a travel book, but it is also a masterpiece of creative writing compared with which the author's epic poem seems, to my mind, poor and boring stuff.

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THERE is also another point of view. Sir Harold Nicolson, for instance, stirred up a regular hornet's nest when he recently suggested, at the annual general meeting of the London Library, that the age of fiction is dead; that it is today an occasional, rather than a permanent, form of expression, because it requires for its practice a state of security such as is no longer found in any part of the world. This is, of course, an exaggeration, as doubtless it was meant to be. Creative genius is able to flourish in any circumstances, and some of the greatest works of the imagination have been written during times of political unrest. It is true that at the moment there do not appear to be any great creative writers, but I do not believe that this is entirely due to the circumstances of our times; in the past it is possible to discern other equally lean periods. It is, however, not necessary to despair; there is no reason to suppose that never again will a writer of genius emerge.

I suppose that a creative artist naturally uses the form that best suits him, and it seems significant that today so many have concentrated upon the writing of travel literature. This emphasis is, of course, not unconnected with our social conditions, but I believe it to be due also to the realisation that fiction is not really the form of expression to which most writers are naturally adapted. Mr. Peter Mayne,* for instance, if he so wished, could obviously have written an amusing and lighthearted novel against the background of Marrakesh; the fact that he has chosen to describe his adventures in the form of a straightforward narrative gives his book an authority it would not otherwise possess. And how much better it is than those many modern novels which are in point of fact rather inferior books of travel thinly disguised as fiction!

Mr. Robert Liddell is another case in point. He has already published some half-dozen or so novels and several books of criticism, but I am inclined to think that *Ægean Greece*† is the best thing he has so far done; certainly it is no offshoot of his fiction, but a piece of creative work in its own right, the fruit of many journeys and a lifetime of study and reflection.

* *The Alleys of Marrakesh*. By PETER MAYNE. Murray. 15s.

† *Ægean Greece*. By ROBERT LIDDELL. Cape. 25s.

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HERBERT JENKINS

IN HIS attack upon travel books Mr. Quinton goes on to say that "the travel book of personal impressions can only be of value, outside a kind of family circle, as a pendant to a body of imaginative writing; it cannot be a self-subsistent alternative to it. In such books the place is second in importance to its observer and these authors—polite, cultivated, broad-minded, eager to please—have little more to claim our notice with than the fact that they have been abroad. In literature, as in private life, this is not enough."

This is a dangerous generalisation, and in any case it applies only to the most inferior form of travel literature, which it is not my purpose to defend. Sir Osbert Sitwell, who has essayed most literary forms (even the drama), is, of course, in a class by himself. *The Four Continents*,* is not, I think, his best travel book, but these discursions on foreign countries, art, and life would be of permanent value if they were no more than an account of the sort of leisurely

* *The Four Continents*. By OSBERT SITWELL. Macmillan. 25s.

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journeys to distant parts of the world that are no longer possible. But *The Four Continents* is not a travel book in the generally accepted meaning of the term; and while it is in some ways a supplement to the author's autobiography, it is in no sense the left-overs from the longer work. It displays both formal qualities and considerable imagination; in short, although a minor one, nevertheless a work of art.

Michael Swan is the kind of writer who has been particularly under fire, since he went to Mexico for the express purpose of writing a book about it and is honest enough to say so. It must be admitted that this procedure is not generally conducive to creative writing, but it does seem to have given Mr. Swan the necessary inspiration. *Temples of the Sun and Moon** is full of out-of-the-way information, which I have not found in any other book about Mexico, but what makes it outstanding is the enthusiasm and fresh approach with which it is written. The illustrations (mostly from the author's own photographs) are exceptionally good.

I HAVE always thought it odd that in Britain, where the amateur of the arts has more influence than in any other country, versatility is regarded with suspicion. Mr. Alan Ross is a good example. He happens to be one of the best sports writers in this country, but he is also among the most interesting of our younger poets. His book about Sardinia† is written on two levels. It contains all the necessary factual information anyone is likely to need, but the greater part of it is an evocation of the island life. In less skilled hands this highly personal approach could easily have been tedious; that it is not is due to Mr. Ross's exceptional gift for imagery and his mastery of lucid descriptive writing. It is interesting to compare this book with D. H. Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia* (written after a visit of only six days) of which, incidentally, Mr. Ross provides a penetrating analysis.

Mr. Vincent Cronin is in many ways the most stimulating of the writers under discussion since he seems to have invented a new formula. He is primarily a classical scholar, but he has chosen to describe his researches into the Dædalus legend in the form of an account of Sicilian life, both past and present. The importance of the myth is perhaps unduly stressed, but *The Golden Honeycomb** is a first book of exceptional promise. This is an author worth watching.

And finally, *The Stronghold*† by Mr. Xan Fielding, an extremely detailed account of a comparatively small area of Crete which the author first came to know when he was sent there as an agent during the war. This is an informative and well-written book, although somewhat lacking in variety. It would have been improved by the excision of some of the many descriptions of alcoholic meetings with former comrades.

THE seven books I have briefly noted are not the only good ones of their kind that have been published in Britain during the past twelve months. They are, however, representative of the best travel writing in this country. I myself cannot believe that the form is a sterile one; in fact, with the rapidly growing awareness of the importance of anthropological studies, this genre is likely to develop in most interesting and unexpected ways.

Much of the criticism at present levelled against books of travel, at any rate of the inferior ones, is in reality a criticism of enjoyment. There is now emerging a kind of person who is himself happy to stay, pondering the possibilities of his new atomic world, in the dim recesses of some red-brick university. Himself eschewing all forms of civilised enjoyment, he has little use for those whose needs are not fully met by the bitter brew of dingy English tea-rooms, or the swipes of English locals. He has no desire to travel; he sees no reason why others should. This is, of course, a social and not a literary criticism, but even on social grounds it cannot be defended. In a world beset by petty nationalism it is more than ever necessary that as many people as possible should crash their way through the barriers that are so constantly being erected; and so much the better if many of them have the literary ability to tell us what they have

* *Temples of the Sun and Moon*. By MICHAEL SWAN. Cape. 21s.

† *The Bandit on the Billiard Table*. By ALAN ROSS. Verschoyle. 25s.

* *The Golden Honeycomb*. By VINCENT CRONIN. Hart-Davis. 16s.

† *The Stronghold*. By XAN FIELDING. Secker and Warburg. 21s.

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seen. The results are likely to be of far more importance than almost any novel.

In this age of easy travel we are in danger of being far less well informed than our grandparents; the need now is for more travel. Fortunately some of our most interesting younger writers seem at the moment to be more interested in adventure than in social security. It seems to me a healthy sign, and something to be encouraged. The new puritans of the Welfare State are few as yet, but they need to be resisted.

IN THE above note I have deliberately omitted mention of two books, both outstanding of their kind, because they do not come into the category of creative travel literature. Mr. Francis M. Guercio's *Sicily** was first published in 1938 and this revised edition is a model guide book. *From an Antique Land*† is an account of visits paid to most of the territories of the Middle East by Professor Julian Huxley when he was Secretary-General of Unesco. It is packed with historical, scientific, and archæological information, and is particularly notable for its magnificent coloured illustrations, which were printed in Holland (by Rotogravure N.V. Leiden).

* *Sicily*. By FRANCIS M. GUERCIO. Faber. 30s.

† *From an Antique Land*. By JULIAN HUXLEY. Parrish. 25s.

John Morris

About our Authors

PHILIP TOYNBEE, we understand, has just begun a work in twelve volumes "on a hero of our times." His last book was *Friends Apart*, published in April by MacGibbon & Kee. . . . "A Pawnshop in Naples" is one of a series of sketches which comprise the book, *Il Mare non bagna Napoli*. An English edition of this volume by ANNA MARIA ORTESE will be published some time next year by Collins. . . . P. WORSTHORNE is a British journalist, associated with a leading London daily, who has spent considerable time in the United States. . . . "On Poetry—A Discussion" will be included in a book of DYLAN THOMAS' broadcasts, to be published by Dent this month, entitled *Quite Early One Morning*. . . . DAVID WRIGHT was co-editor along with John Heath Stubbs of *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Verse*, published by Faber & Faber last year. . . . SYLVIA SPRIGGE, former *Manchester Guardian* correspondent in Italy, has long been a close observer of German affairs. Her father, the late George Saunders, was Berlin correspondent for *The Times*. . . . JESSIE D. WALL is a Civil Servant living in London. "Inquisition" is her first published work. . . . DAVID SYLVESTER contributes art criticism to *The Listener* and other publications. His report on the Venice Biennale appeared in our September issue. . . . THIERRY MAULNIER is a leading French playwright and man of letters. . . . RALPH KEENE has worked for a considerable time in Ceylon, directing Ceylonese films. . . . HILARY CORKE is lecturer in English at Edinburgh University. He regularly reviews novels and poems for ENCOUNTER. . . . JOSSLEYN HENNESSY's article, "Shanta, India's Dancer," appeared in our October issue. . . . JOHN MORRIS is director of the Third Programme of the BBC. . . . DONALD DAVIE is lecturer in English language and literature at Trinity College, Dublin.

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